



THE INDEPENDENT

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WEATHER: Dry and bright

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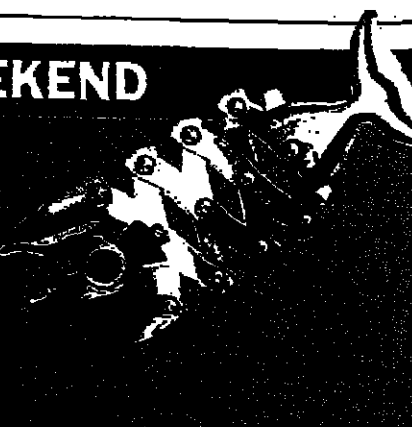
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THE MAGAZINE

Going crackers, getting the gingerbread



Major's message of doom for EU

Anthony Bevins and Sarah Helm

The European Union faced political break-up and economic disaster if it took the wrong decisions on integration and the single currency, John Major said last night. The implicit threat was that a Conservative government could leave the EU if it decided to go down the wrong road.

His threats were delivered at the Dublin summit after President Jacques Chirac of France suggested his colleagues should throw away their prepared briefs on the future direction of the union. Mr Major said he had been presented with two false choices: a choice between political union and a free-trade area. Britain wanted neither.

The Prime Minister said that unless proper flexibility was provided for development of the union, with groups of countries being allowed to go their own way on different issues, it would face grave problems. Countries like Britain would not be forced into unattractive and unappealing action. And if the wrong decisions were taken, "it would blow the European Union wide apart".

Some of the suggestions on the table were not acceptable. An unemployment chapter was "unattractive" and would not create a single job. He would not accept the argument that the union would grind to a halt if enlarged without an extension of qualified majority voting.

As for the single currency, Mr Major said it would be the "most far-reaching decision", which would "dwarf" earlier ones. But he added: "Insisting on a particular timetable is not sensible and can end in disaster". That disaster would follow countries going into a single currency without being ready - "when the only safety-valve will be higher unemployment".

The summit took two further significant steps, when specimen samples of the euro note were issued - with blank spaces for national symbols like the Queen's head - and heads of government agreed the disciplinary terms that will be used to back the single currency.

Then Waigel, the German Finance Minister, said of the code, which will bring in fines for recalcitrant single-currency members: "This means that the Euro will be a strong currency."

In spite of advances made on the single currency, the Irish Foreign Minister, Dick Spring, said the election of the Labour leader, Tony Blair, as prime minister would provide Europe with a positive new contribution from Britain. That rare and diplomatically embarrassing intervention in domestic British politics by the EU's Irish Secretary, Malcolm Rifkind, the opportunity to reply that Europe was indeed waiting for Mr Blair - because he was "naive", "inexperienced", and "silly". He was a soft option who would surrender so much that Mr Major had so securely defended.

But Mr Rifkind conceded that if the Conservative Party did not hold out its differences, it would lose the election. He added later that a Labour win was possible.

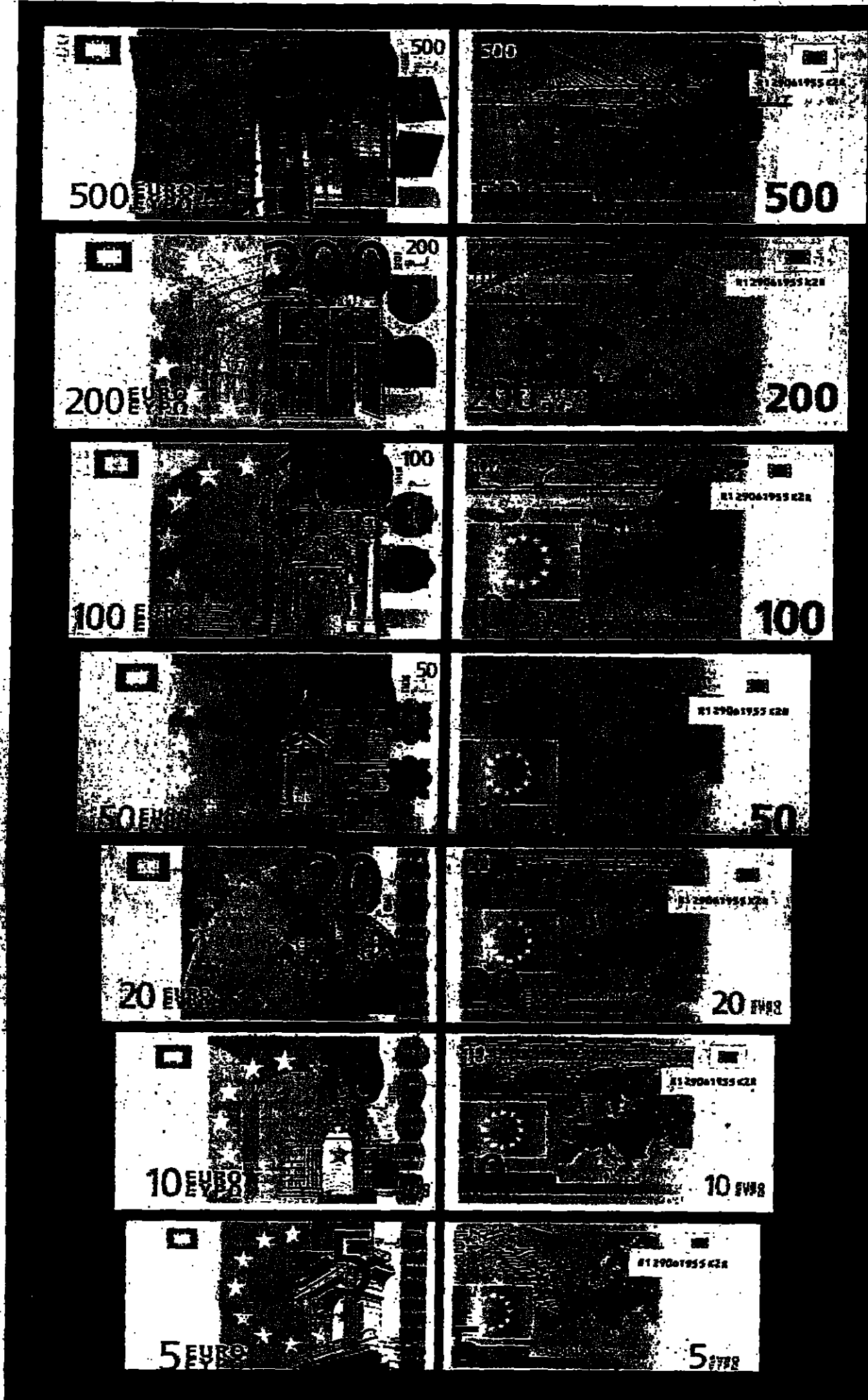
Mr Spring said the Tory split was forcing Mr Major to protect his back, continually deferring to a significant section of rebels.

As for Mr Major, he said: "There is no doubt that some of the socialist countries would prefer to deal with a socialist government in the United Kingdom; that is certainly the case."

However, the evidence from Dublin yesterday was that Mr Blair's arrival at No 10 was as keenly anticipated by non-socialist countries like Germany and France, which have become impatient with Mr Major's vacillation on issues like BSE, and his near-total intransigence on key elements of the new treaty being considered by EU leaders.

Mr Spring told BBC Radio: "We want to see a British government that wants to make a positive contribution to the development of the European Union. Certainly, Mr Blair is expressing a confidence, and the Labour Party is very united in relation to positions on the European Union. Regrettably, the Conservative Party is very divided. It does put them in a very invidious position. I can say this as leader of a party which had problems with Europe back in the 1980s - the Irish Labour Party. You're obviously in a far more difficult position if you are worried about anything you may say, or any initiatives you may take, if there is a large segment within your party that has problems with it. And that is the existing situation within the Conservative Party."

Mr Blair said he was doing everything possible to defeat the Government, but denied he was courting Mr Trimble. He added: "I will try anything I can because it is my duty to bring this government down because it is failing. Of course we keep in touch with David and his party and will continue to do so."



Banking on change: The euro notes unveiled yesterday, from the 500 down to the 5

Photograph: PA

UK braced for IRA attack

Colin Brown, Michael Streeter and David McKitterick

Security forces are on alert throughout the United Kingdom amid fears of a new IRA bombing campaign.

There has been greater vigilance at key sites such as the City and the Canary Wharf complex in London and military installations across the country. Senior politicians in Northern Ireland and at Westminster have been warned they could be assassination targets.

And in recent weeks security has also been increased at potential targets in Northern Ireland, including at Aldergrove Airport, near Belfast.

The threat was underlined

when the IRA tried but failed on Wednesday to blow up a security forces vehicle in Belfast with a Semtex-filled mortar.

This week, in the run-up to Christmas, the head of Scotland Yard's Anti-Terrorist Branch, Commander John Grieve, warned of these "dangerous months" and urged people to be on their guard.

"Unfortunately it is a reality of life that we need to be continually aware of the threat of terrorism, particularly from the Provisional IRA," he said.

Tony Blair, on a visit to Northern Ireland yesterday, emphasised that he would not play politics with the peace process and promised that in office he would be "straining every sinew" to move it forward.

The Labour leader stuck to his approach of keeping his party's approach closely aligned to the Government on questions such as the possibility of a new IRA ceasefire and of Sinn Féin's entry into talks.

He visited the constituencies of the three main parties, meeting the Ulster Unionist leader David Trimble, Seamus Mallon of the SDLP and Peter Robinson of the Democratic Unionist party.

Mr Blair said he was doing everything possible to defeat the Government, but denied he was courting Mr Trimble. He added: "I will try anything I can because it is my duty to bring this government down because it is failing. Of course we keep in touch with David and his party and will continue to do so."

Other police forces are also showing extra vigilance. A spokesman for Greater Manchester Police, which had to deal with a devastating IRA bomb in June, said it was deploying a "high-profile" police presence to reassure the public.

Cabinet ministers believe the IRA will put off a renewal of the ceasefire until days before a general election to put the maximum pressure on Mr Blair and a possible incoming Labour government.

They are convinced that hopes of an extended ceasefire at Christmas will be dashed by the IRA. One minister said: "They have become highly active and are clearly planning attacks."

UN agrees at last on new leader

David Usborne New York

An international diplomatic stalemate ended yesterday when Kofi Annan, a 58-year-old Ghanaian, was appointed as the new Secretary-General of the United Nations.

Mr Annan will formally succeed Boutros Boutros-Ghali next month. Mr Boutros-Ghali

wanted to stay on for a second five-year term, but was forced finally to stand down after pressure from the United States.

In an old-fashioned diplomatic spat, France, angered at Washington's stance, had been determined to support the incumbent, and to resist the appointment of Mr Annan. Yesterday, however, France de-

cided that it would withdraw its veto against him.

Mr Annan seems set to receive bouquets and brickbats in equal measure from the rest of the world, as has become traditional for holders of the post.

The choice of Mr Annan is likely to be made official by the UN's General Assembly on Monday or Tuesday.

Kindly Kofi, page 12 Annan: French withdrew veto

Seven notes that bring one currency

Sarah Helm Dublin

John Major has said he wants to "wait and see" before he decides whether to join monetary union.

Yesterday, he (and everybody else) could see just what the shape and size of a single currency will be, though a British decision on membership seemed as far away as ever.

Depicting bridges between nations and gateways to the future, Europe's new Euro banknotes were unveiled "at the dawning of a new common Europe".

But what is this new common Europe? According to the map on the notes parts of Finland are missing. Russia is there, but Turkey is not. Britain is clearly part of Europe but looks somewhat mis-shapen. The Shetlands are missing and Wales will be unhappy with its bulge.

There are no people in this future Europe; the designs show monuments and bridges but no Europeans.

"The difficulty with people," said Alexander Lamfalussy, president of the European Monetary Institute, fore-runner of the European Central Bank, "is that people usually belong to a country..."

As for the shape of Europe, Mr Lamfalussy admitted: "A few islands have disappeared and not all the countries are entirely covered." But, he added, optimistically, "the geography will be sorted out".

Reaction to the designs was generally favourable. "Pretty. Stylish. Very European," were some comments. "Bland," was another.

The faces of the notes, in seven denominations from 5 to 500 Euro, depict windows and gateways from the seven "ages" of European cultural history,

including classical, baroque and modern 20th century. The reverse side shows a bridge design from the same periods.

None of the pictures, however, shows an identifiable European monument. All are an amalgam of different European styles.

The name, euro, appears in both the Latin and Greek alphabet. An Austrian artist, Robert Kalina, won the contest for the note design after each member state submitted its own offerings.

The most contentious issue, of whether a national symbol will appear on the notes, remains to be decided.

One-fifth of the note's reverse side has been left clear for such an eventual, but the Queen will not know if she is to appear until the middle of next year.

Close by, at Dublin Castle Europe's heads of government at their summit meeting were having difficulty sketching out their future map of Europe.

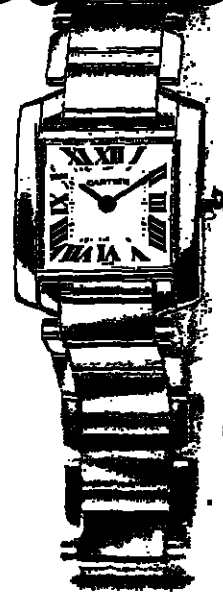
How many countries will be "in" or "out" of the Euro-zone remained as unclear as ever. But Europe's leaders were able to proclaim a breakthrough in building the architecture for the single currency zone.

Agreement on the stability pact, which will govern economic policy after the creation of the euro, will be taken as yet another sign of Europe's political will to launch the Euro in 1999.

Mr Lamfalussy proclaimed the unveiling of the Euro notes as a milestone. Although the notes will not start circulating until 2002, yesterday's date was, he said, of "major historic significance."

It seemed to have escaped Mr Lamfalussy's notice that the notes were being launched on Friday 13th.

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QUICKLY

McLibel trial record
Britain's longest ever trial drew to a close yesterday. Helen Morris and David Steel defended themselves in a libel case brought by the fast-food multinational McDonald's that was in court for 313 days and became a counter-culture cause célèbre. Judgment is not expected until Easter at the earliest. Page 3

Major will soldier on
John Major will be able to soldier on until an election date of his own choosing, he claimed yesterday. "I have no doubt, providing people behave themselves, we can get through to our preferred date," he said in Dublin. Page 5

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E. coli infection spreads to nurse

Steve Boggan
Chief Reporter

A nurse has contracted poisoning by *E. coli* bacteria while treating victims struck down by the epidemic sweeping central Scotland, health officials confirmed last night.

Despite wearing a protective mask, gloves and clothing, the nurse at Falkirk Royal Infirmary fell ill last Tuesday after caring for two patients on a ward. She is now recovering at home, but the fact that she was poisoned simply from contact with the pa-

tients demonstrates how infectious *E. coli* 0157 can be.

"We believe this is a cross-infection from contact with patients rather than contact with infected food and it has caused us all some distress," Douglas Harper, the hospital's medical director, said. "It has certainly concentrated our minds on how infectious this organism is."

Details of the auxiliary nurse's condition were released within hours of Sir David Carter, Scotland's chief medical officer, telling journalists that the outbreak would soon be

over. The total number of those infected is just below 400 and 11 people have died, but for two days running, there had been no new cases reported.

However, before the nurse's condition was made public, Sir David said: "We are particularly concerned now about the danger of secondary spread from one individual to another. That has not materialised as a major problem in this outbreak but I think the more days that go by the more confident one will be in saying that this outbreak is not just contained now, it is now over."

The correct word at present I think is the word contained.

"When we get into next week, towards the end of next week, if there are no new cases then I think we could be confident in saying that it was over."

The nurse, who has not been named, was part of the hospital's team handling the *E. coli* outbreak. During the past few weeks, the team had treated 18 patients but only two were remaining when she became ill last Tuesday.

"She is fine now, but we are concerned that she became in-

fectured at all," Mr Harper said. "We practice barrier nursing, which involves wearing a mask, gloves and protective clothing. However, not to be too indelicate, a lot of diarrhoea is involved. Some of the people affected are quite debilitated and caring for them requires a lot of personal hygiene. Somehow, this nurse, who is very experienced, accidentally became exposed and was inadvertently infected. It is a warning to people at home - good personal hygiene can stop this spreading."

Earlier, Michael Forsyth, the

Secretary of State for Scotland, travelled to Aberdeen with Sir David to meet Professor Hugh Pennington, the man in charge of medical inquiries into the outbreak.

Sir David said: "Mr Forsyth promised unlimited resources to Professor Pennington and his team, saying they had done 'detective work which Sherlock Holmes would be proud of'. He added: 'As far as Professor Pennington's lab is concerned, of course we will provide help and support. Whatever he wants he will get.'



Military salute: Cadets passing out at the Sovereign's Parade at Sandhurst in Surrey yesterday. At the ceremony, reviewed by the Duchess of Gloucester, 700 officer cadets were on parade, 212 of whom were being commissioned into the Army, as were 22 cadets from overseas

Photograph: David Rose

significant shorts

Helicopter crash claims three pilots

A civilian helicopter which went missing with three English pilots on board, prompting a major search, was yesterday found crashed in mountains in the Irish Republic.

Coastguards in Kilkenny said the missing SE76 crashed in Carlingford Mountains, Co Louth. All three pilots were believed to be dead. Two bodies were found in the wreckage, eyewitnesses said. The third pilot was unaccounted for.

Judge condemns 'perverted and evil teenager'

A "thoroughly perverted and evil" teenager who raped a 93-year-old widow in a churchyard was yesterday ordered to be detained for 12 years.

Judge Anthony Thorpe told Steven Barton, 17, "The offence... is so appalling as to make the blood of every right-thinking person in this country run cold."

Barton, who was 15 at the time of the offence, in September last year, was convicted of raping the widow by a jury at Chichester Crown Court. He had attacked the woman when she visited a plaque in memory of her late husband in St Mary's churchyard, Storrington, West Sussex.

Internet child porn sentence

A man was jailed for two years yesterday after he admitted distributing child pornography on the Internet.

Christopher Wells, 27, had more than 1,100 pictures stored in computer systems, Birmingham Crown Court was told. Wells, of Lewing Avenue, Maldon, in Essex, admitted possessing indecent photographs of children and distributing them between March and August this year.

Fraud claims at Hackney

A formal challenge to the accounts of Hackney Council, the troubled London borough hit by Labour group splits and allegations of fraud and racism, was made yesterday to the district auditor, Chris Koelbl.

Simon Matthews, Labour housing spokesman for the area, made allegations of corruption against fellow councillors. Steve Boggan

Priest jailed for child abuse

A Roman Catholic priest who systematically abused boys and girls over a 14-year period was jailed for two-and-a-half years yesterday at Belfast Crown Court.

Father Joseph Steele, originally from the New Lodge area of north Belfast, had admitted a total of 25 charges of indecent assault involving three boys and seven girls between September 1969 and December 1983.

Four years for cannabis man

A drug grower who catalogued his crop of 845 cannabis plants in a book headed "Captain's Log, Stardate January 1995, Planet Earth," was jailed for four years today, Robin Scott, 47, was sentenced at Truro Crown Court.

'Giant sewage tank' outrage

Environmentalists and politicians yesterday criticised Home Office plans to moor a prison ship in Portland Harbour alongside a special conservation area.

Friends of the Earth said the five-deck ship, which could hold 500 inmates, amounted to "a giant sewage tank" Ian Burrell

Chauffeurs halt strike action

The first ever strike by ministers' chauffeurs - scheduled to start on Monday - has been postponed for special days. The Government has increased its pay offer from 2.3 per cent to just under three per cent. Negotiations are to resume on Monday. Barrie Clement

THE INDEPENDENT ABROAD

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Bob Monkhouse at the Beeb

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I'm Sorry I Haven't a Clue 3

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Hancock's Half Hour 8

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BBC

Security bill hits nursery cash

Lucy Ward
Education Correspondent

The Government has scrapped plans to bring in nursery vouchers in Northern Ireland next year, prompting renewed claims from Labour that the scheme is collapsing.

Higher spending on security in the province following the ending of the IRA ceasefire early this year has forced education budget cuts, according to Sir Patrick Mayhew, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Withdrawing the vouchers, due to be introduced next September, will save £8.3m a year.

Announcing a £60m cut in education spending, Sir Patrick said: "The peace dividend has, alas, been reversed and this obviously has an adverse effect on the provision of public services in Northern Ireland." An extra

£120m was being channelled into law and order and compensation for criminal damage during 1997-98, he said.

The decision puts Northern Ireland out of step with the mainland, where nursery vouchers are due to be launched in April. Labour seized on the reversal as evidence of a breakdown of the controversial pre-school vouchers scheme.

Labour's education spokesman, David Blunkett, said: "The bureaucracy of vouchers is such that even some ministers now realise it makes more sense to provide real nursery places."

The latest blow to the nursery voucher scheme comes just weeks after a Budget announcement of a £56m cut in the money promised on the grounds that pilot schemes showed it was unlikely there would be 100 per cent take-up.

Pregnant terror suspect 'could lose her baby'

Patricia Wynn Davies
Legal Affairs Editor

The terrorism suspect Roisin McAisley yesterday failed to secure bail while awaiting extradition to Germany after a medical report warned she could lose her unborn child.

Gareth Peirce, her solicitor, told Bow Street magistrates' court that Ms McAisley's medical needs had been ignored, despite the instructions of Ronald Bartle, the stipendiary magistrate, at her last appearance that she be well cared for.

The doctor's report said that she showed signs of "advanced starvation" due to repeated vomiting, had no access to natural light and was in danger of losing her baby. Ms Peirce said.

The German government is seeking to extradite Ms McAisley, the 25-year-old



Roisin McAisley: Starving

special supervision, "closed" visits through screens and restricted contact with other prisoners.

Mr Bartle said the medical report made "disturbing reading... I commented on the last occasion that Ms McAisley's condition should be properly provided for." But ordering that she stay in jail until her next appearance on 20 December, he said: "I feel that my public duty demands that I do not alter the previous ruling."

A Prison Service spokesman said Ms McAisley was taken to a London hospital on 5 December and had a scan and full examination by a consultant obstetrician. "He confirmed that she was in good general health, that her 16-week pregnancy was progressing normally and that there was no cause for concern."

Help for child victims

Glenda Cooper

As abuse scandals continue to be exposed in children's homes around the country, we would like you to support our Victims of Abuse appeal to help those who have been made to suffer.

Earlier this year, the toll of years of abuse for more than 100 children in Croyd was highlighted in this newspaper.

The investigation was the launch-pad for a campaign that won government action to tighten standards in children's homes.

This week we revealed that police are seeking 3,000 children who may have been part of

another scandal, in the Northwest.

Our Christmas appeal is in support of work by the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, including its helpline, giving direct support to children who have been abused, and projects to help prevent future abuse.

Countless stories from children, in the community as well as in residential care, have never been heard. The NSPCC, Britain's leading charity specialising in child protection and prevention of cruelty, runs more than 120 projects throughout England, Wales and Northern Ireland, offering counselling

and therapy to abused children as well as carrying out its own investigations into allegations of abuse.

The charity relies on public donations for 85 per cent of its income and we would like you to contribute between now and Christmas.

Your money will go to help projects such as the NSPCC's freephone helpline which takes on average 1,200 calls a week, the London Investigation Team, which works with police and social services to investigate paedophiles, and the Kaleidoscope project in Newcastle, which treats children who have abused other children.

THE INDEPENDENT/NSPCC Victims of Abuse Appeal

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End of an era: the Waleses divorced; the lottery was born; OJ went free – after 313 days in court, McLibel draws to a close

Nicholas Schoon

Britain's longest-ever trial has finally slogged to a close after 313 days. Now all that is awaited after yesterday's closing speeches is the judgement from Mr Justice Bell, and that is not expected until Easter at the earliest.

The defendants, the weary and 'impecunious' McLibel Two, are not optimistic about the judge clearing them of libelling McDonald's. But Helen Morris and David Steel are talking about mounting an appeal if he finds in favour of the

judge said: "This was in the happy days when I knew nothing about this case."

All those months in court have turned neither Ms Steel nor Mr Morris, both unemployed, into smooth-tongued lawyers. "So, um, there you go..." was how he concluded one point.

But their fortitude in refusing to apologise and to take on the task of defending themselves at London's Royal Courts of Justice have made them into counter-culture heroes. They have cost McDonald's a fortune and gained huge publicity for their allegations against the burger chain on the Internet and in press reports around the world. They have become minor celebrities, but it shows no sign of going to their heads. They remain ordinary, rather serious, old-fashioned anarchists.

At lunchtime, as usual, the two defendants and a few supporters went to a student café in the nearby London School of Economics. Meanwhile Mr Rampton's team spurned the delights of the nearest McDonald's and took their permanently-booked lunchtime places at an Italian restaurant.

Mr Rampton, one of Britain's top libel lawyers, told *The Independent* that Ms Steel and Mr Morris' amateur status had slowed down the case considerably. "It proceeds so much more slowly... it's frustrating in that respect." But his long, long sojourn in Court 35 was no great personal strain. "We're paid to do a job, so it really doesn't matter."

Paid handsomely, in fact: McDonald's legal fees will run to several million pounds and if the judge does award costs and damages against the two defendants they have next to nothing to hand over.

McDonald's claims Mr Morris, a 42-year-old single parent, and Ms Steel, aged 31, were leading lights in the publication and distribution of a leaflet which claimed that eating McDonald's food could cause bowel and breast cancer and heart disease. (The leaflet also alleged staff were exploited, ill-paid and would be dismissed if they tried to join a trade union, and that the production of McDonald's food caused hunger in the Third World and the destruction of rainforests. At the top of the leaflet were the words: "McCancer, McDisorder, McFinger and McDeath.")

The defendants, both unemployed and reliant on state benefits, deny publishing the leaflet but argue that its contents are true. Three other leafleteers whom McDonald's issued writs against in 1990 apologised, but not the McLibel Two. There have been 130 witnesses cross-examined, and 50 others have submitted statements. "We say the evidence vindicated us on all of the issues raised in the leaflet," said Mr Morris outside the court.

Quick-fried guide to McDonald's

■ The McLibel case found its way into the record books by becoming the longest-running civil trial of all time in the UK. The previous longest was 103 courtroom days in March 1872; Arthur Orton was convicted on two counts of perjury for claiming to be Roger Tichborne, brother of Baronet Alfred Tichborne. (Source: *Guinness Book of Records*, 1996)

■ Linda McCartney, wife of ex-Beatle Paul, has contributed £1,000 to the legal expenses of the defendants.

■ McDonald's is estimated to be paying £4000 a day on legal costs. Total costs could exceed £5m.

■ McDonald's had to pay out \$2.9 million to an 81-year-old woman in Albuquerque, U.S. The lady claimed to have been scalded by its coffee. The company's law firm found that the coffee was served at 82 degrees Centigrade because the heat apparently increased the taste quality.

■ Currently there are 20,000 McDonald's restaurants in 101 countries around the world. There are more than 35 million McDonald's burgers sold every day.

■ McDonald's has opened 212 new restaurants since July 1994.

■ \$3 billion-a-year hamburger multinational, and if that fails of taking the case to the European Court of Human Rights. They claim the trial, which has taken place without a jury, has been oppressive.

The two, who have defended themselves in the absence of legal aid, made closing speeches which occupied more than six weeks. Richard Rampton QC, counsel for McDonald's, has handed in 550 pages of submissions.

And so the final day stuttered out with a series of points of law from both sides. Mr Justice Bell made no secret of his fatigue. When ex-postman David Morris spoke about something that happened in the years of pre-trial manoeuvrings the



JONATHAN ANSTEE

The McLibel Years:

■ Provisional IRA started and ended its ceasefire
■ Eurostar services started through Channel Tunnel
■ OJ Simpson's trial started and ended in acquittal
■ The Oklahoma bombing killed 168

■ Sixteen Primary School children and their teacher killed at Dunblane
■ Hugh Grant arrested on indecency charge in Los Angeles
■ Rosemary West jailed for life for Cromwell Street murders
■ The National Lottery started
■ Pop group Take That split up

■ Yitzhak Rabin was assassinated in Israel
■ Headmaster Philip Lawrence stabbed to death outside his school
■ President Mitterrand died of cancer aged 79
■ The Prince and Princess of Wales divorced

Labour's 'Today' vote angler is civil servant

Christian Wolmar and John Rentoul

Labour yesterday launched an internal investigation into the attempt by party workers to rig nominations for the BBC Today Personality of the Year Award.

It emerged last night that Jules Hurry, the woman in whose name the fax requesting party workers to nominate Tony Blair for the award was sent, is a civil servant with the Ministry of Agriculture.

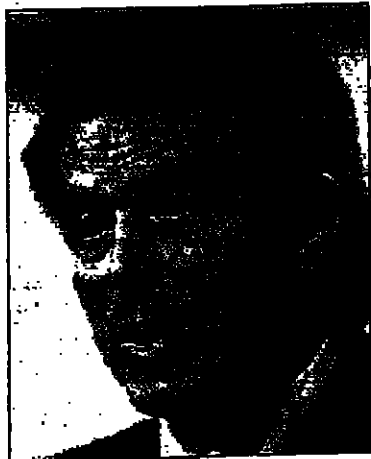
It will compound embarrassment in the party over the affair, which wiped the fact that the Tories now have a minority government off the front pages of some newspapers.

It became clear yesterday that the plan was part of a "fish-farming" exercise to try to influence phone-in programmes, local newspapers and other media by getting Labour supporters to write or phone. There is a section, staffed by two volunteers, at the party's HQ with the task of carrying out this work, called the "Audience Participation Unit".

The official version was that the unit was "reactive rather than proactive" and merely "helps Labour supporters who want to write to newspapers or get their views across in other ways."

But a former Labour party worker said that there was a concerted attempt to influence media. He said: "It was called fish farming. That was the name for doing things that were seen as like putting people into a pond. It was a campaign headquarters for by-elections."

He said that the party ran an ap-



Tony Blair: Did not make shortlist

eration during the 1987 election campaign to organise people to take part in phone-ins. However, the scheme was dropped after a woman who had arranged a Tory minister became the subject of tabloid investigations.

Another Labour insider said: "The key to these operations was to never write anything down. It should always be done by word of mouth." He said there was no doubt that the Tories did this sort of thing all the time, but "they are a bit cleverer than us in the way they go about it."

Yesterday Tory Central Office refused to deny that it had also run similar exercises.

Asked about allegations by a former Welsh Tory, Elyn Jones, that the Tories had done the same thing two years ago when John Major, at the nadir of his popularity, came second

to the late Roy Castle, a spokesman said: "These are allegations by a disaffected Tory."

The Today award now appears so flawed that the BBC will consider scrapping it. Mr Major, who has been shortlisted again, finished second in the past two years, despite the fact that his party trailed well behind Labour in polls throughout that period. In the Eighties, Margaret Thatcher won the award for woman of the year eight times out of nine.

While the Princess Royal was the other winner, it may have been quiet efforts by Central Office that ensured she saw off what must have been strong competition from the Queen and the Princess of Wales.

Mr Blair, who did not make the shortlist anyway, said the person involved had tried to drum up support through an "excess of zeal". He told the Today programme: "As soon as we learned about it, it was stopped."

Labour also attempted to sow confusion about how exactly the exercise was carried out. Labour's election supremo, Peter Mandelson, denied Ms Hurry was responsible for the vote-rigging drive.

He said it was not her but "another, more junior, member of staff" who was behind it. However, he refused to elaborate on the identity of the person responsible.

In a damage-limitation exercise, Tom Sawyer, the general secretary of the party, announced the holding of an internal inquiry into the incident but there are no plans to publish the result.

Leading article, page 15

It's just not cricket: Botham Jnr sells his soul to rugby

David Llewellyn

The name is the same, but not the game. Liam Botham may be a chip off the old block but he is still his own man. There was no way that he could have emulated the feats of his father, former England Test cricket all-rounder Ian Botham, who singlehandedly, and in one bound, won the Ashes when Liam was just four years old, in 1981.

Now, 15 years on, Liam has decided on a professional sporting career – in rugby. He could have carried on playing cricket with Hampshire, but yesterday Liam, a former Rossall School pupil who plays at outside centre, signed a three-year contract with Courage First Division club West Hartlepool.

"While it wasn't an easy decision to make," said Liam, 6ft 1in and almost 14 stone. "I've discussed the position, not only with my father, who has never pushed me to follow either route, but also with professional advisers. I've always had a slight preference for rugby."

Mark Ring, West's director of rugby and a former Wales international, said: "It is virtually impossible to combine summer and winter sports at a professional level these days. Liam has had a taste of cricket at a professional level and now has the challenge ahead of professional rugby at a national level. I think he has a great future."

Liam appears to be blessed with the same team of script writers as his father. On his debut for Hampshire against Middlesex last season, Botham Junior claimed five wickets for 67 runs, including the scalp of former England cap-



Liam Botham: First Division contract

tain Mike Gatting. It does not stop there. Last October, when he made his senior debut for West Hartlepool he scored a try against Watsonians.

Rugby certainly looks a likelier bet for the Legend's son. There is a hard core of realism running through the youngster. He confided recently: "I can never win at cricket having this name. If I do badly they would say I was only in the side because of whose son I am."

But there was a wishfulness when he told the interviewer: "... I wish I could be called plain Liam Bloggs."

Somehow it seems improbable that a Botham could be plain anything. Quite rightly he is being pragmatic and playing to his strengths. And Bloggs or Botham, Liam could well make his name in rugby.

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BARNESLEY: THE AFTERMATH

Major tells MPs: obey and survive

Colin Brown
Chief Political Correspondent

John Major will be able to soldier on until an election date of his own choosing, he said yesterday – providing his warring backbenchers "behave".

"I have no doubt, providing people behave themselves, we can get through to our preferred date," he said in Dublin. "I am not going to indicate any particular dates. Certainly, I think we will be able to hang on to our preferred date."

But Tony Blair, Labour leader, also in Dublin, declared: "The Government majority has gone and we will continue to pile on the pressure until the Government has gone too. This is a government that has ceased to have any real purpose but its own survival, and the country needs and deserves better."

Malcolm Rifkind, the Foreign Secretary, yesterday was forced to re-arrange an historic visit to Cyprus after the Government lost its Commons majority in the Barnsley East by-election.

The first bilateral visit by a British foreign secretary to the divided Mediterranean island in 30 years was brought forward so that he could return for Monday's crucial vote on European fishing policy.

The Government faces defeat in the vote without the support of the Ulster Unionists. 12 months after the Government was defeated on the same issue, Tory MPs have been given a three-line whip to make sure they are in Westminster for the vote.

Mr Rifkind's hastily re-arranged plans showed the difficulty facing ministers in the run-up to the general election. The Prime Minister now effectively has to run a minority government after the rejection of the Tory whip by the MP Sir John Goss, in protest at cabinet

a hospital in his constituency. Stephen Dorrell, Secretary of State for Health, said he had "bent over backwards" to answer Sir John's demands and was not planning further concessions. Mr Dorrell also appealed to Euro-sceptic Tory MPs to back the Government.

Some ministers believe the in-fighting over Europe is now terminal for the Tory party. "There is no sign of us pulling out of this before the election. I am just waiting to have a go at them when we lose," one pro-European minister said.

The Euro-sceptics remain convinced they can harden policy to rule out entry into a single currency early in the early spring. "Ken Clarke will be forced to go along with it," one leading backbench Euro-sceptic said.

More than 100 Tory MPs are preparing to put a commitment in their election addresses saying they would not vote for a single currency in the next Parliament, flouting current government policy to keep the option open.

Labour pledged to herry the Government out of office at the earliest opportunity after it comfortably held Barnsley East with a majority of 12,181 in spite of a low turnout. John Prescott, the party's deputy leader, challenged Mr Major to call the by-election in the Tory seat of Wirral South, where an election is pending following the death of Barry Forster.

Barnsley East result: Jeff Ennis (Lab) 13,683 (76.4%), David Willis (LD) 1,502 (8.4%), Miss Jane Ellison (C) 1,299 (7.2%), Ken Capstick (Socialist Labour Party) 949 (5.3%), Cousie Nibbeli (Liberal Party) 378 (2.1%), Ms Julie Hyland (Socialist Equality Party) 189 (0.9%), Lab maj 12,181 (68.9%), 0.2% swing Lab to LD. Election 95,129; turnout 71.9% (53.7%), 1992 Lab maj 24,777 (63.0%); turnout 59,314 (72.7%), Patchett (Lab) 36,346 (77.2%), Proctor (C) 5,569 (10.2%), Ainsworth (LD) 2,999 (6.6%).



The toast is Labour: Jeff Ennis, by-election victor, breakfasting with his wife Margaret and their children yesterday morning

Photograph: PA

Echoes of 1979 as Ulster holds key to power

Colin Brown

Ulster MPs could again bring down the Government, ending 18 years of Tory rule as they began, with a vote of no confidence in the Commons.

On the night that James Callaghan's Labour government fell, the confidence vote turned on one man: Frank Maguire, an independent republican from Fermanagh and South Tyrone.

All day speculation had raged about whether Mr Maguire, a cheerful landlord in the border "bandit" country, would turn up to rescue the Prime Minister.

When he arrived at the Commons, there were sighs of relief that he would save Labour from defeat.

But as 10pm approached and MPs crowded in for the vote, it became clear he had no such intention. He told angry Labour MPs that he had turned up to



Jim Callaghan: History of his overthrow may be repeated

abstain in person". Dennis Skinner, the left-wing Labour MP for Bolsover, remonstrated with Mr Maguire behind the Speaker's chair as the voting took place, tugging him to go into the division lobby with Labour.

But Mr Maguire, a big man, would not budge. The result, when it was read out, produced

cheers on both sides. By then, the Labour government was exhausted. It had suffered more than 30 defeats in its attempts to soldier on after the Lib-Lab pact had broken down.

The Prime Minister's parliamentary aide, Roger Stott, now a backbench Labour MP, said: "It is draining and sapping when you have no majority. You have to make sure everybody is available for the vote: the sick are brought in."

"It was a dreadful situation and it was predictable that on one night, all the forces would combine to bring us down. We won on the big things, but they just kept chipping away."

Margaret Thatcher's opposition pursued the Labour gov-

ernment relentlessly through the Winter of Discontent after the Prime Minister had failed to go for the autumn 1978 election everyone expected.

Two of her biggest trouble-makers were backbenchers, Norman Tebbit and the late Nicholas Ridley.

The Labour government fended off defeat by trying to reach alliances with the minor parties. The three Welsh Nationalist MPs were promised a Bill to help miners who had pneumoconiosis. The Ulster Unionists were promised extra seats in Westminster and a gas link to the mainland.

One minister yesterday recalled being told during a debate to offer them an electricity

link to the mainland to avoid a defeat.

The electricity interconnector has yet to be built. It is being delayed by a decision by Michael Forsyth, the Scottish Secretary, to refer part of the route to an inquiry after criticism of unsightly pylons being strung across part of Scotland.

The coup de grace was delivered on night of high drama. As a symbol of Labour's industrial troubles, the staff at the Commons were on strike, and no hot food or drink was available in the Palace.

The shadow of Ireland again fell over Westminster after Labour's defeat when, in the brief lull before the election campaign, Mrs Thatcher's chief

strategist and Northern Ireland spokesman, Airey Neave, was assassinated by a car bomb at the Commons by the INLA, a break-away terror group from the IRA.

John Major is expected to commit the Government on Monday to implementing a selective cull of beef herds, beginning in Northern Ireland, which may buy more time from the Ulster Unionists.

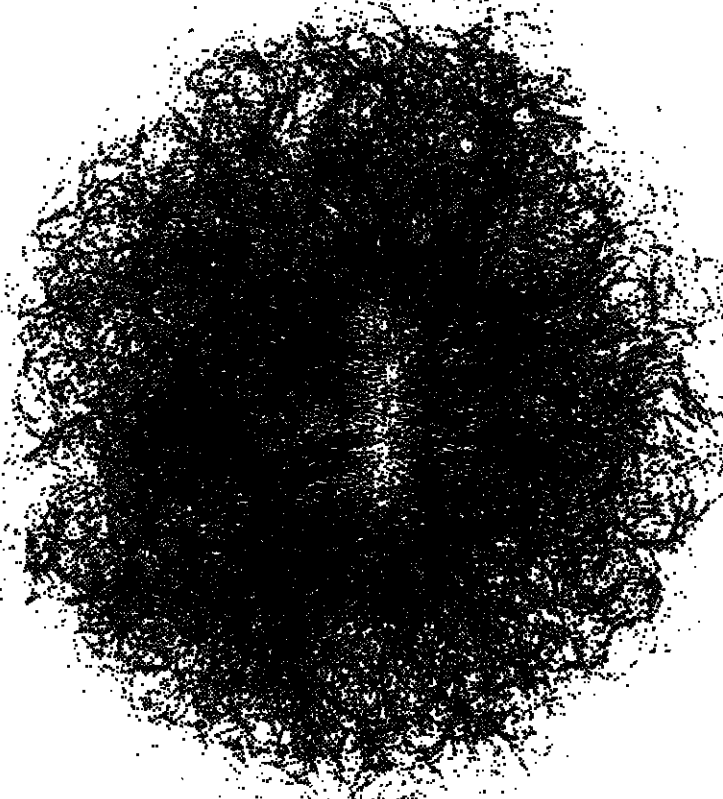
Ministers expect David Trimble, the Ulster Unionist leader, to try to bring down the Government in March.

Mr Major may therefore try to beat the Ulstermen to the punch, and go to the country on a date of his own choosing at the end of March.

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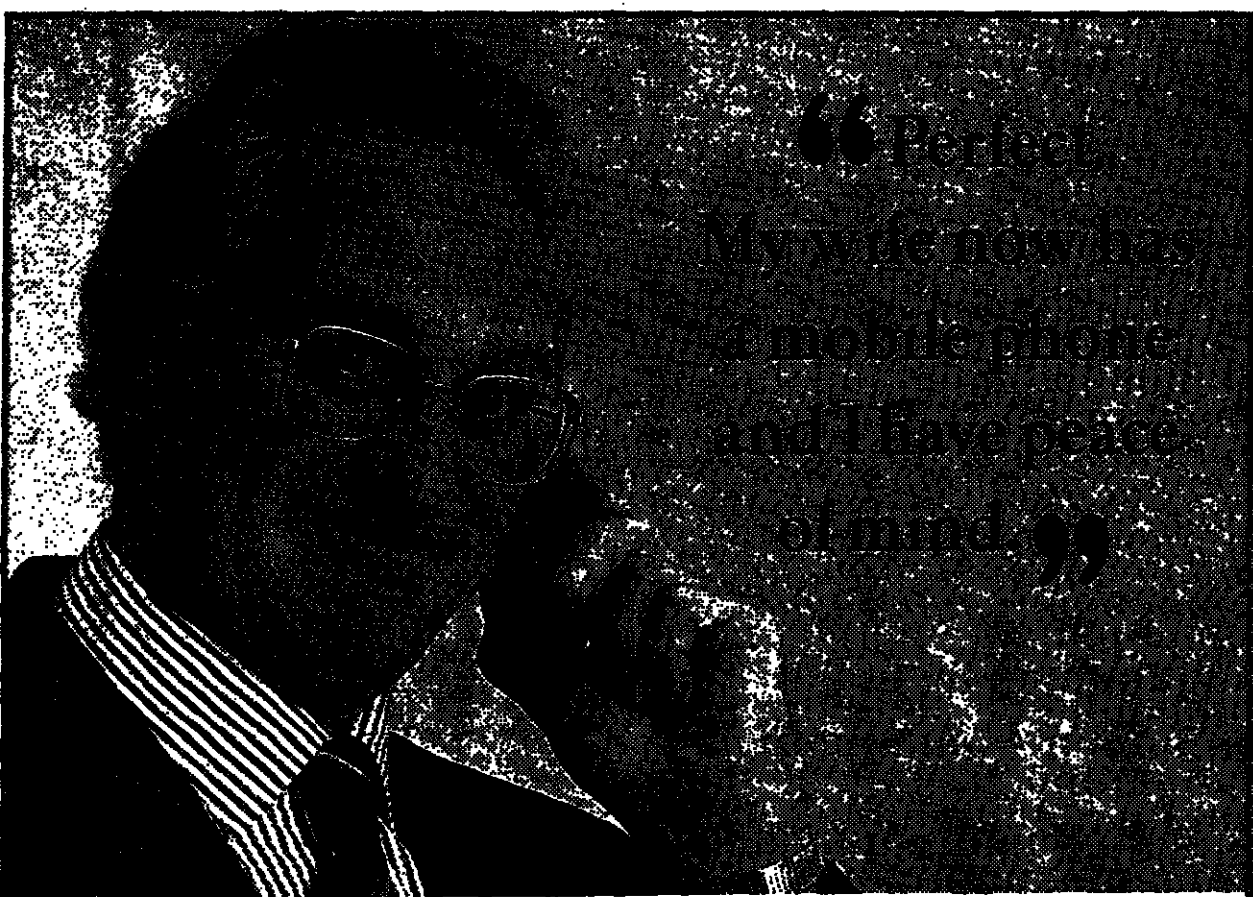
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Dealers in combat knives face jail

Patricia Wynn Davies
Legal Affairs Editor

A Government-backed Private Members' Bill to jail dealers in combat knives won all-party approval yesterday as it received an unopposed Commons Second Reading.

Jimmy Wray, the Bill's sponsor, secured the backing of the Home Secretary, Michael Howard, for the measure, despite initial Government resistance on the ground that "combat" weapons could not be distinguished from household knives.

Under the Bill, it would be an offence, punishable by up to two years in jail, to market a knife in a way which "indicates or suggests that it is suitable for combat" or will "stimulate or encourage violent behaviour". It will also be an offence to sell, hire or offer for sale a knife suitable for combat. Whether a particular knife is "suitable for combat" will be for the courts to decide.

Mr Wray, who came top of the private members' ballot, criticised the Government's failure to come up with a workable definition of a combat knife sooner. "It is not beyond the wit of reasonable people to tell the difference between a knife designed to cut through bread and one designed to cut through people."

If someone could show a lawful purpose for a knife, it should not be an offence, he said. "I believe we can get the balance right."

Mr Wray, MP for Glasgow Govan, conceded that the carrying of an offence weapon in a public place was already an offence. "But that is not enough."

We must also tackle supply by banning the sale of weapons that have only the purpose of wounding and killing. The tide of public opinion has turned against these weapons being available."

The MP said the names of some knives - including an "SAS shoulder-holster knife and a Rambo short sword" - alone betrayed their purpose. The Bill, a response to the appeal by Frances Lawrence after the stabbing of her late husband, Philip, would also extend police powers to allow an officer of superintendent rank or above to order the stopping and searching of people or vehicles within a specified area for 24 hours, renewable for 24 hours.

David Maclean, the Home Office minister, pledged the Government's support, saying: "I believe the proposals in this Bill will make a significant contribution in stamping out the unpleasant and unacceptable ways combat knives are marketed."

Alun Michael, his Labour shadow, said: "We are pleased that the Government has finally acted to curb the menace of combat knives."

The Bill has been welcomed as a step towards changing the culture of violence by the Police Superintendents' Association, although it had lobbied the Home Office for an all-out ban. But the Police Federation, which represents rank and file officers, said yesterday that the measure did not go far enough.

"The Bill as drafted will not in our view result in a legal ban on the sale of such knives," a spokesman said. "We fear they will simply be sold as 'sporting' or 'hunting' knives."



Beauty and the beasts: Actors James Horne, standing, and Andrew Ryan, who play ugly sisters Sharon and Tracey, preparing for a rehearsal of the pantomime Cinderella before their season opens at the Theatre Royal, Bath, on 19 December
Photograph: John Voos

Gore back in vogue for anti-fur campaign

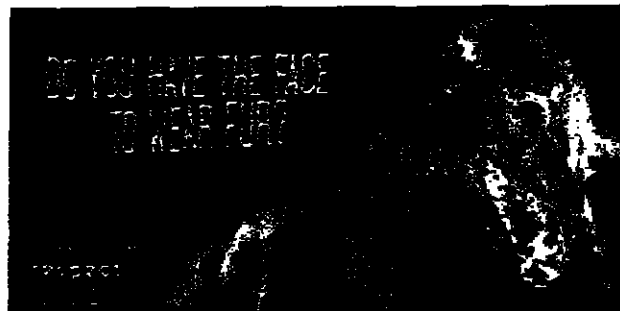
Michael Streeter

After the models, the nudity and the glamour, comes the harsh reality.

A graphic anti-fur campaign was launched yesterday which focuses on the reality of the dead animals which are used for fur coats rather than the celebrities who oppose them.

The campaign by Respect for Animals employs posters depicting the skinned head of a fox emerging, teeth-bared, from a fur coat, together with the caption: "Do you have the face to wear fur?"

Its style is in grim contrast with another poster unveiled six weeks ago by People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (Peta) on which models posed naked under the caption: "Turn your back on fur."



Skin deep: The poster designed 'to make fur-wearers think'

Both are a response to a growing perception that after years of social rejection, fur is fashionable once more. Fashion designers Karl Lagerfeld, Gucci, Prada and Amanda Wakeley have been flouting it on the catwalk and French *Elle* magazine recently declared: "It's okay to wear fur again."

Yesterday's campaign was launched by the singer Cathy Dennis, fashion designer David Fielden and the Labour MP Ken Livingstone.

Its spokesman, Mark Glover, said the poster had been cleared by the Advertising Standards Authority, and justified its graphic nature. "We think it goes far enough but not too far. Obviously it's designed to make fur-wearers think about the garments they're wearing and where they come from. That's our object and we feel this is the best way of achieving this."

Mr Glover added that 95 per cent of people in Britain were against wearing fur, but he warned that the current fashion for fake fur meant a growing acceptance of the real thing.

Many large department stores, including Selfridges, now have a no-fur policy, refusing to stock garments featuring any fur. Harrods no longer has a fur department but sells garments with fur-trim collars.

Twelve years ago, fur sales in Britain totalled £280m and by 1989 had dropped to £11m. But recently sales have started to creep up again and the British Fur Trade Association reported imports of fur into Britain of £22m in 1994, up from £18m the previous year. The Fur Education Council claimed sales were up 30 per cent last year.

The poster was received badly by the fur-selling trade. At outfitters Swaine Adeney Briggs and Herbert Johnson, in central London, retail manager Richard Jaggs-Fowler described the poster as "horrendous" but said it would not prevent him ordering more than 100 mink, sable and fox-fur hats a year.

"Wearing fur is more natural than bringing oil out of the ground to make a man-made coat," he said.

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Mandela gives right chance for pardons

President Nelson Mandela yesterday extended the scope of South Africa's post-apartheid "truth commission" to include a white rightist attempt to derail democracy and gave offenders five months longer to seek a pardon. Those guilty of human rights abuses in the fight over apartheid would have until May to apply for amnesty. Mr Mandela set 10 May 1994, the day of his inauguration as the country's first democratically elected president, as the cut-off date for crimes that could qualify for a pardon. *Reuters - Pretoria*

France faces justice reforms

The French justice minister, Jacques Toubon, promised to set up a commission to consider reform of the court system, following remarks by President Jacques Chirac on the independence of the judiciary. But he declined to endorse Mr Chirac's suggestion that the appointment of law officers could cease to be in the gift of the government. Mr Chirac is the first president to broach the possibility of severing the link between certain groups of law officers and the justice ministry. *Paris - Mary Dejevsky*

Milosevic offers to let observers check elections

President Slobodan Milosevic offered to let international observers check the fairness of local elections which the opposition say were rigged. Mr Milosevic, under pressure from the US, protested in a letter to Warren Christopher, Secretary of State, that Serbia had a healthy democracy and accused the opposition Zajedno (Together) coalition of "political terrorism". *Reuters - Belgrade*

Saudi behead male 'witch'

Saudi Arabia beheaded a Syrian man by the sword for practising witchcraft, the state-run Saudi television reported. An interior ministry statement said a court had decided on the maximum penalty because of what it considered the dangerous effect witchcraft could have on individuals and society. *Reuters - Dubai*

Nazi gold profit

The Swiss National Bank acknowledged that it had profited from business with gold plundered by Nazi Germany but said it had not dealt with any gold from concentration camp victims. *AP - Zurich*

Dublin summit: Germans bow to French demands on 'stability pact' to police single currency

The euro: your flexible friend

Sarah Helm
Dublin

A hard-fought deal on how to police the future single currency was finally achieved at the European summit in Dublin yesterday, giving important new impetus to monetary union.

Germany, which has been insisting on the strictest rules for a future "stability pact," had to bow to French demands for a more flexible system. The stability pact will be the rulebook for countries inside the euro-zone, setting out a system of fines and penalties to be levied against countries which let their economies slip out of line.

Theo Waigel, the German finance minister, yesterday declared that the rules would be "a strong currency." Germany would be excused fines for exceeding budget deficit rules only in the case of very deep recession, exceeding 2 per cent negative growth. Mr Waigel rejected suggestions that Germany's hard line was an attempt to dominate decision-making, saying that it was not some "Teutonic stability craze."

However, a last minute compromise formula allowed France to claim that it had won some concessions from Bonn. France and other member states have demanded less severe penalty rules, arguing that a degree of political control and flexibility should be introduced. France is concerned that the single currency will be controlled

solely by technocrats and bankers inside the future European Central Bank.

However, Helmut Kohl, the German chancellor, was determined to maintain a tough negotiating stance in order to shore up confidence among the German public that the euro will be as strong as the mark. Latest opinion polls show as few as 16 per cent of Germans support the coming of the euro.

There were already signs yesterday that leaders were moving on to discuss the next contentious issue: who should

Europe's leaders are determined to win over a sceptical public

enforce the fines. Under the Maastricht Treaty it is envisaged that finance ministers will act as judges, ruling against recalcitrant member states. But proposals for a wider form of informal economic government to run the Euro zone - termed a "stability council" - are gathering pace.

Negotiations on the final stability pact deal, which were carried out by EU finance ministers, were long and tense. All member states agreed that countries which allow their public deficits to exceed three per cent of gross domestic product after the launch of the euro,

should be subject to penalty procedures. Under these procedures each member state would have to submit its budget proposals to the European Commission and the European finance ministers would hear Commission recommendations on which countries are running out of line.

Kenneth Clarke, the Chancellor, has had to fend off accusations that Britain might be subject to the rules even if it remains outside the single currency. Mr Clarke has won assurances that the rules and fines would not affect Britain if it does not join the euro.

The dispute which climaxed in Dublin arose over when exceptions could be made, allowing countries to escape fines, because of exceptional circumstances, such as recession or natural disasters.

In the final deal, Germany achieved its desired 2 per cent upper limit. However, agreement was reached that countries whose economies hit recession should be allowed to argue an "exceptional circumstance" on a case by case basis. This means that France had its bottom line written into the deal. However, in an addendum, countries did agree that they would endeavour not to argue exceptional circumstances in cases of negative growth of up to 0.75 per cent. The decision on whether to let individual countries off the fines procedures would be decided by a qualified majority vote amongst European Union finance ministers.



Grin and bear it: Kenneth Clarke and John Major arrive in Dublin yesterday. Photograph: PA

Collins's way with words miffs Mafia stronghold

Andrew Gumbel
Rome

The citizens of Reggio Calabria are furious, and all because of the Collins English Dictionary. Anyone thinking of visiting the city, on the tip of the Italian boot, would do well to keep any copies of the offending publication out of sight for fear of a lynching. Misinformed, malicious and utterly racist - such are some of the milder words being used about HarperCollins these days.

The reason? Collins put out a press release listing a few of the new words and phrases they have come across in recent research and will now consider for inclusion in the next edition. One phrase was "Reggio Calabria Syndrome", to define the mysterious symptoms affecting gangsters and others living in Mafia-controlled areas.

The term was picked up from Channel 4's *Europe Express* and referred to research by Francesco Aragona, a professor at the University of Messina who has examined the corpses of mafia victims in the Reggio area and discovered their organs show the sort of stress levels more commonly associated with 70-year-old stroke or heart-attack victims.

Sticking the label "Reggio Calabria Syndrome" on to this phenomenon might seem harmless enough but does not take into account the toughness of Italians when it comes to the judgement, or perceived judgement, of foreigners. "This is a piece of pseudo-culture that... presumes to make judgements that have no relationship to reality," said the city's deputy bishop, Salvatore Nunnari. Never mind that Reggio is regularly cited as the murder

capital of Italy, or that this week its most prominent anti-Mafia magistrate said his efforts to fight organised crime were on the brink of collapse.

Much of the indignation has centred on the notion that Collins would put such a phrase in their dictionary on the basis of a mere television programme. Some of the critics might be surprised to know that Collins feels the same way. "With only citation, we wouldn't dream of putting it in," said the dictionary's managing editor, Diana Treffy.

Which rather takes the venom out of the affair, though you would not know it from the Italian reaction. Someone had better pass the message on quickly, before the high stress levels down south mutate from Reggio Calabria Syndrome into a life-threatening case of Aggravated Collins Syndrome.

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£25,000 or more	5.60	4.48	£500 - £2,499	0.50	0.40
£10,000 - £24,999	5.18	4.14	POSTAL 7⁺ (Monthly)		
£2,500 - £9,999	4.55	3.64	£100,000 or more	3.68	3.10
£500 - £2,499	0.50	0.40	£50,000 - £99,999	3.43	3.06
POSTAL 90 (Annual)			£25,000 - £49,999	3.40	2.72
£50,000 or more	4.60	3.68	£10,000 - £24,999	3.62	3.10
£25,000 - £49,999	4.38	3.60	£2,500 - £9,999	2.18	1.74
£10,000 - £24,999	4.05	3.24	£500 - £2,499	0.50	0.40
£2,500 - £9,999	3.00	2.40	POSTAL ACCOUNT¹ (Annual)		
£500 - £2,499	0.50	0.40	Can now be operated through branches		
POSTAL 90 (Monthly)			£50,000 or more	3.85	3.08
£50,000 or more	4.51	3.61	£25,000 - £49,999	3.25	2.60
£25,000 - £49,999	4.41	3.53	£10,000 - £24,999	3.10	2.48
£10,000 - £24,999	3.98	3.18	£2,500 - £9,999	2.15	1.72
£2,500 - £9,999	2.98	2.37	£500 - £2,499	1.90	1.52
£500 - £2,499	0.50	0.40	£2,500 - £9,999	1.80	1.44
POSTAL 60 (Annual)			£500 - £2,499	0.50	0.40
£100,000 or more	4.10	3.28	POSTAL ACCOUNT¹ (Monthly)		
£50,000 - £99,999	4.05	3.24	Can now be operated through branches		
£25,000 - £49,999	3.98	3.18	£50,000 or more	3.78	3.02
£10,000 - £24,999	3.05	2.44	£25,000 - £49,999	3.20	2.59
£2,500 - £9,999	2.65	2.12	£10,000 - £24,999	3.06	2.45
£500 - £2,499	0.50	0.40	£2,500 - £9,999	2.13	1.70
POSTAL 60 (Monthly)			£500 - £2,499	1.88	1.50
£100,000 or more	4.03	3.22	£2,500 - £9,999	1.80	1.44
£50,000 or more	3.98	3.18	£500 - £2,499	0.50	0.40
£25,000 - £49,999	3.54	2.85	GO DIRECT²		
£10,000 - £24,999	3.01	2.41	Can now be operated through branches		
£2,500 - £9,999	2.62	2.10	£50,000 or more	3.85	3.08
£500 - £2,499	0.50	0.40	£25,000 - £49,999	3.25	2.60
POSTAL 30 (Annual)			£10,000 - £24,999	3.10	2.48
£50,000 or more	4.00	3.20	£2,500 - £9,999	2.15	1.72
£25,000 - £49,999	3.53	2.84	£500 - £2,499	1.90	1.52
£10,000 - £24,999	2.70	2.16	£2,500 - £9,999	1.80	1.44
£2,500 - £9,999	2.25	1.80	£500 - £2,499	0.50	0.40
£500 - £2,499	0.50	0.40			

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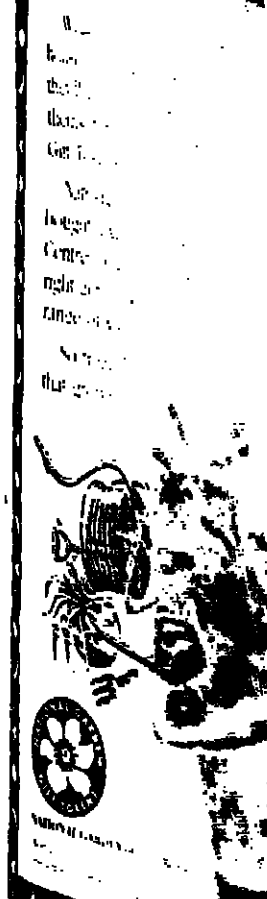
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Sheep's as Saddle

Settler grow death to po

The term was picked up from Channel 4's Europe Express and referred to research by Francesco Aragona, a professor at the University of Messina who has examined the corpses of mafia victims in the Reggio area and discovered their organs show the sort of stress levels more commonly associated with 70-year-old stroke or heart-attack victims.

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Sheep's blood on streets of Baghdad as Saddam's son survives shooting

Leon Barkho
Reuters

Baghdad — The street where gunmen tried to kill President Saddam Hussein's eldest son was splattered with sheep's blood yesterday, and thronged with Iraqis celebrating that Uday survived the attempt on his life.

The spraying of blood from scores of slaughtered sheep symbolised that a bad omen had been dispelled. Thousands of people gathered at the site in Baghdad's smart district of al-Mansour, where Uday's car was attacked by gunmen as he drove through, unguarded, on Thursday evening.

A brass band played the national anthem, women swayed to the tune and several people showered the crowd with chocolates and other sweets. "The evil intentions of killing the symbol of Iraq's youth have failed," said one man. "When conspiracies fail, it is an occasion to celebrate."

Eyewitnesses said at least two gunmen attacked Uday's car, injuring the 32-year-old



Devoted: Iraqi women, carrying a picture of the President, pray for Uday's swift recovery

along with several bystanders. Uday was later reported to be in satisfactory condition in Baghdad's Ibn Sina hospital.

The ruling Baath Party newspaper, *al-Thawra*, published a presidential statement issued hours after the attack. No details were given of the identity of the attackers, or whether there were other casualties. In-

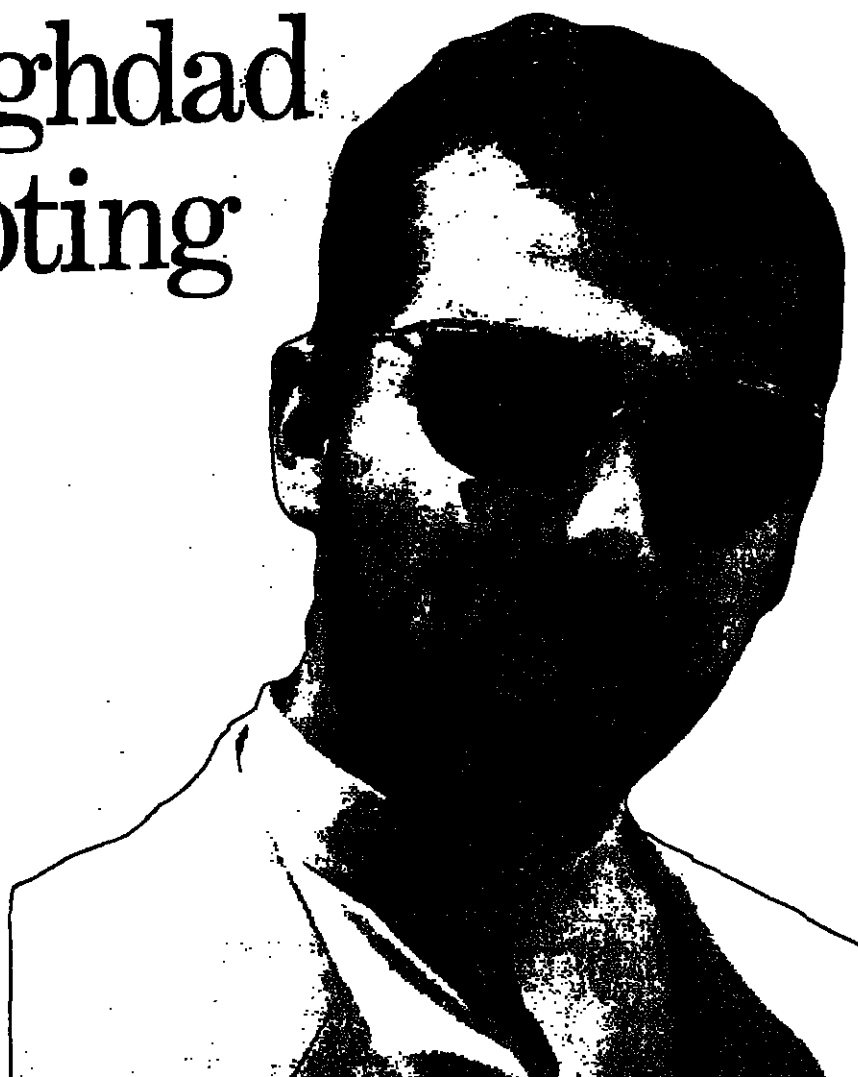
vestigations were under way, the paper said.

Whoever shot Uday could have been one of his many enemies — both within Iraq's inner-circle of power and in the exiled opposition. The shooting exposed a hole in Baghdad's usually watertight security and highlighted the threats that exist to President Saddam's rule.

per and television channel. Uday's influence goes far beyond his modest official title — chairman of the Iraqi Olympic Committee. Although his younger brother, Qusay, heads Iraq's special security forces, Uday has also muscled his way into power, upsetting people within and outside the ruling circle.

Opposition groups say Uday has now emerged as the informal crown prince of Iraq, though diplomats in Baghdad say Saddam used the turmoil around him to reassert his own absolute authority. A wave of arrests in Baghdad over the summer led to reports of a coup attempt, but there are few signs that Saddam's 25-year grip on power has waned.

Uday, a loose cannon in Saddam's inner clique of close relatives, was briefly out of favour after he beat to death one of his father's favourite servants in November 1988. He later married the teenage daughter of Barzan Ibrahim al-Tikriti, another of Saddam's half-brothers, only to reject her and send her back to her father.



Target: Uday is said to have made many enemies

Photographs: AFP

Settler growth 'death to peace'

Eric Silver
Jerusalem

Palestinian leaders and opposition Israelis last night predicted a new explosion of violence after Benjamin Netanyahu's right-wing government restored social and economic incentives for Jews to settle the West Bank that were abolished four years ago by the late Labour prime minister, Yitzhak Rabin.

They condemned the decision, taken yesterday in response to Wednesday's Palestinian killing of a mother and son from the Beit El settlement, as a death blow to the ailing peace process. Hamas, which rocked Israel with a series of suicide bombings early this year, is already threatening to resume its attacks.

Hanan Ashrawi, a minister in Yasser Arafat's Palestinian administration, denounced the Israeli decision as an aggressive act. "It's taking us back to the days of confrontation, to the days before the peace process," she told *The Independent*. "It's a very dangerous decision. It not only violates the integrity of the peace process, it removes any chance of peace."

Ephraim Sneh, a candidate to

succeed Shimon Peres as Labour Party leader, criticised the settlement initiative as "a prescription for new outbursts of violence and the collapse of the interim arrangement with the Palestinians". Mr Sneh, a former military governor of the West Bank, accused Mr Netanyahu of wanting to turn it into another Bosnia.

Galia Golan, a spokeswoman for the Peace Now movement, argued: "Netanyahu intends to expand settlements. That means expropriating Arab land; that means more building; that means creating incentives for people to go and live there. Each one of these steps makes it more difficult for Arafat to negotiate."

The decision did not specify how many additional homes ministers would sanction. But the intention was clearly to consolidate and expand the Jewish presence in the heartland of the West Bank. It offers tax breaks to settlers and commits the government to invest more in social services in the settlements. It provides state loans of 60,000 shekels (£12,000) to homebuyers there, with 50 per cent of that amount turning into a grant if they stay put. And it dangles incentives before firms to establish factories.

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international

High drama as UN picks kindly Kofi

David Usborne
New York

Amid high drama in New York, Kofi Annan, the kindly but disciplined 58-year-old from Ghana, was abruptly anointed as the next Secretary-General of the United Nations after France yesterday informed colleagues in the Security Council that it would withdraw its veto against him.

The council was expected to complete an official vote selecting Mr Annan later yesterday, he will therefore replace Boutros Boutros-Ghali when his five-year term expires at the end of the month. The choice of Mr Annan will almost certainly be rubber-stamped and therefore made official by the UN's General Assembly on Monday or Tuesday.

Mr Annan, who has been in charge of UN peace-keeping since 1993, quickly emerged as the strong front-runner in a string of informal straw-poll votes held by the Security Council every day since Tuesday. France, however, had been threatening to scupper his chances. On Thursday, the vote count in the council was 14 in favour of Mr Annan and only one against, with France as the lone stand-out.

The French manoeuvring stemmed from its support for a second term for Mr Boutros-Ghali and its anger at the United States for determinedly standing in the Egyptian's way. In November, the US vetoed a formal attempt to reappoint Mr Boutros-Ghali. The French stance against Mr Annan, though short-lived, was in the spirit of a crude tit-for-tat against the US.

Many diplomats had expected France to maintain its position at least into next week to ensure maximum discomfort for the US and also for Britain, which has also been a strong backer of Mr Annan. First whispers of a French change of mind began filtering to New York early yesterday morning; they were sourced to the European Summit in Dublin.

In recent days, Britain has played a pivotal role in helping support to coalesce around Mr Annan. Sir John Weston, Britain's ambassador to the UN, had repeatedly warned that without agreement on Mr Annan, the chance offered to Africa to have one of their own in the post for another five years would be lost.

Yesterday's change of tack is potentially embarrassing for France. It was not clear whether Paris had levered some consolation prize from its allies for acquiescing to Mr Annan's appointment, such as the promise of senior UN positions for French officials.

Currently Under Secretary General for Peace-keeping, Mr Annan commands fierce loyalty among UN officials and is widely liked and respected. This in spite of the fact that under his leadership, the UN's peace-keeping division has suffered some humiliating setbacks.

France's formal objection to Mr Annan is that as a 30-year UN civil servant he is not the best figure to bring fresh energy to the UN. His obscurity beyond the UN also means that he does not instantly have the international stature to be able easily to converse with heads of government.



Family matters: Ghinwa Bhutto, leader of a faction of the Pakistan People's Party, waves to supporters in Lahore. She is considering standing against her sister-in-law Benazir, the deposed prime minister, in February elections. Photograph: Mohsin Raza/Reuters

Chirac's second thoughts on media glasnost

Mary Dejevsky
Paris

After President Jacques Chirac's two-hour television grilling on Thursday night, the Elysée could be forgiven for having second thoughts about its elaborate exercise to engage the President in a "real dialogue" with the people. For the first time, the high, protective walls guarded by the country's political media establishment were breached, a measure of *glasnost* came to French political broadcasting – and the result was not to the President's advantage.

In place of the flag, anthem and a respectful, almost reverential tone, Mr Chirac was introduced with racy film-clips contrasting his election promises with his performance in office and asked to defend himself. Instead of deferentially open questions of traditional presidential broadcasts, Mr Chirac was asked real questions, the sort the French "man or woman on the street" asks, but which political interviewers on French television avoid.

"Why is the country in such a mess?" "Why did you attack technocrats during your presidential campaign, but now surround yourself with them?" "What about the political corruption cases, including those of your own Gaullist party?"

When, as with the corruption question, Mr Chirac veered off in another direction, he was hauled back to address the specific point. The two younger interviewers even had the temerity to try the odd interruption.

To British eyes and ears accustomed to the aggressive questioning of politicians on the *Today* programme or *Newsnight*, Mr Chirac had an eerie ride. No one was trying to catch him out, no one was trying to make him say anything he did not want to say. Even so, the decision to bring to the interviewing table journalists from outside France's closed political media clique was a bold step, engineered largely by Mr Chirac's daughter, Claude. She masterminded his appeal to the youth vote during the presidential campaign and has since done her utmost to update the way the president is packaged.

Bringing the presentation up to date, however, means the President, too, has to adapt – and the evidence is that there is still some way to go. As some critics of Mr Chirac's performance said yesterday, it was as though Mr Chirac was a spectator of his own government, as though he had nothing to do with decisions taken and could applaud or deplore the government's performance.

Reno stays in Clinton team

Rupert Cornwell
Washington

President Bill Clinton has taken more steps towards completing his second term Cabinet by choosing New Mexico Congressman Bill Richardson as Washington's new United Nations Ambassador, the Democratic troubleshooter, William Daley as Commerce Secretary, and by keeping on the controversial Janet Reno as Attorney General.

Of the appointments the most striking is that of Mr Richardson, 49, a Hispanic-American best known as unofficial US envoy to Cuba, North Korea, Burma and Sudan, where this month he negotiated the release of three American hostages held by guerrillas in the south.

A dogged negotiator, he will bring very different qualities to the job currently held by the combative and forthright Madeleine Albright, whom Mr Clinton promoted last week to Secretary of State.

Like Ms Albright, however, he seems assured of speedy confirmation by the Senate – as does Mr Daley, a centrist who played a key role in building the bipartisan coalition on Capitol Hill to vote through the *Nafta* trade agreement in 1993.

In other moves, Mr Clinton is retaining the services of the efficient Robert Rubin as Treasury Secretary, and was expected to name his aide, Gene Sperling, as head of the National Economic Council, the body coordinating economic policy. If those appointments were plain sailing, however, the re-appointment of Ms Reno was not.

Undoubtedly Mr Clinton – or at least a vocal array of her critics within the White House – would have liked to jettison Ms Reno. To do so, however, would have invited criticism that he was replacing her with a crony at the Justice Department, just as Whitewater and other investigations involving the President and the First Lady were moving into a decisive phase.

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Black-out adds to Manchester airport war

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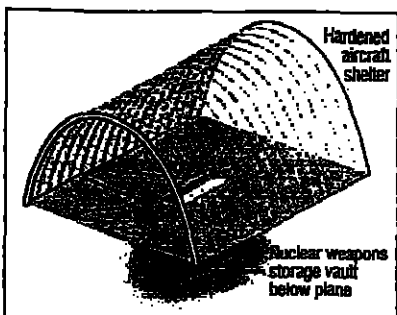
Christopher Bellamy examines how the alliance is adapting to new realities of the post-Cold War era

As Nato pledged not to move nuclear weapons on to the territory of new alliance members in East Europe, the US has been withdrawing tactical nuclear weapons from Europe, and The Independent has learnt that only about 200 of its bombs remain as a small "sub-strategic" force.

Instead of detailed plans for the use of these and strategic nuclear weapons in specific scenarios, Nato commanders are now allowed to make plans at short notice based on existing databases about possible targets. Nato countries operating aircraft able to carry nuclear weapons (the US, Britain and France) will in future only be required to maintain one unit trained and ready for nuclear attack.

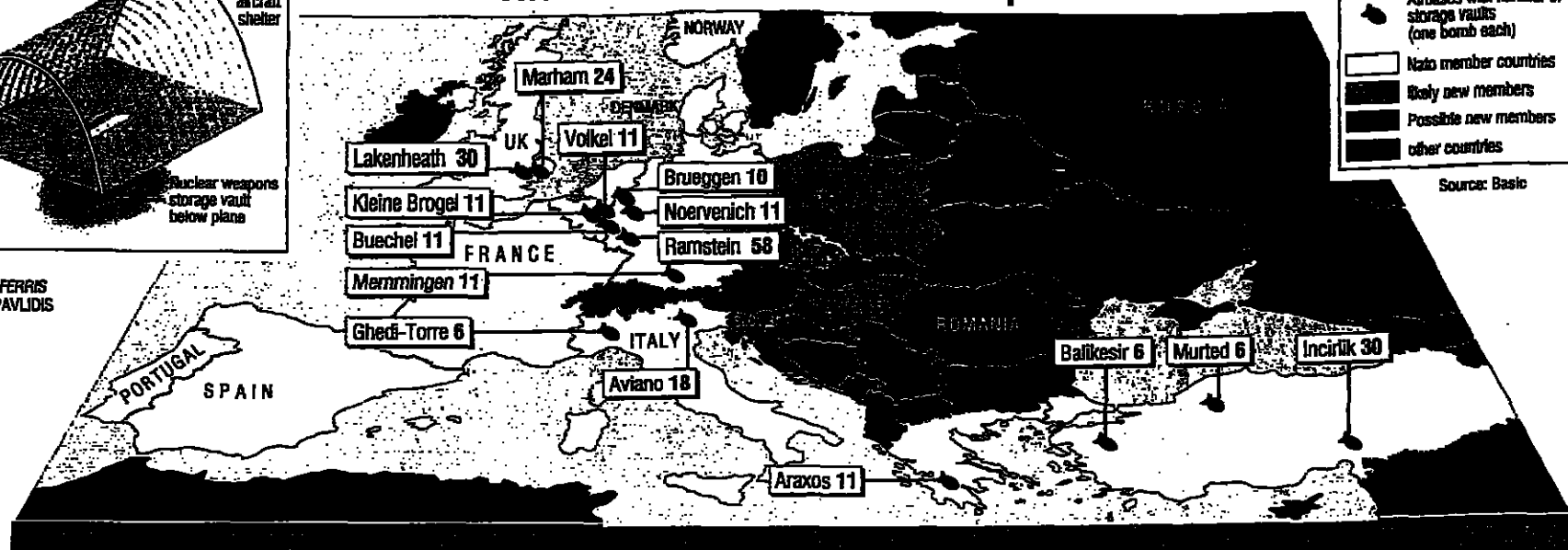
The only US tactical nuclear weapons in Europe are the slim B-61 nuclear bombs which are carried on F-111s, F-15 and F-16 aircraft.

Following the abandonment of the nuclear-weapons storage area at Lakenheath, Suffolk, The Independent



GRAPHIC: KRISTINA FERRIS AND JIM PAVLIS

The last nuclear bombs in Europe



reported on 28 October that US nuclear weapons had probably all been withdrawn from the UK. But this is now understood to have been premature. Most of the weapons have been withdrawn, but up to 30 may still remain in new weapon-storage vaults situated beneath the hardened shelters where the aircraft which could still carry them are parked.

The idea of weapons-storage vaults was discussed in the early to

mid-1980s and work began in 1987 on the vaults, each of which holds one B-61 US or British WE-177 nuclear bomb.

Originally Nato planned to build 437 such vaults at 26 sites but with the end of the Cold War the Senior Level Protection Group, known by the acronym, Slowpog, cut the programme to 308.

The vaults mean that it is much cheaper to store the weapons, as it

is unnecessary to guard a separate site. They also permit the bombs to be loaded into the aircraft in secret, though this might not always be an advantage, as any news that aircraft were being armed might be an important deterrent in itself.

However, Nato was concerned that the "igloos" which were formerly used to store nuclear weapons were located several miles from the aircraft, and therefore required "con-

voys with large security forces travelling through unrestricted areas. The very presence of the convoys attracts attention and they may be vulnerable to sabotage."

The new system consists of vaults in the floor of the arch, hardened aircraft shelters. They are equipped with sensors and television monitors for security, and control consoles to lift the bombs into the aircraft by remote control.

Details of the weapons-storage vaults have been compiled from open sources by the British American Security Information Council - Basic - an independent analysis group. The only US base in Britain with these vaults is RAF Lakenheath, where there are 30. There are also 24 at RAF Marham. The RAF will dispose of its last free-fall bombs in 1998, and thereafter Britain's "sub-strategic" deterrent will be provided

The vaults are equipped with... consoles to lift the bombs into aircraft by remote control

by Trident missiles with single warheads.

Germany still has the largest nuclear-weapons storage capacity - 101 vaults. The vaults in Germany, Britain, Belgium and the Netherlands and at the US-operated Aviano base in Italy have all been completed and activity is now concentrated on Nato's southern flank. Coincidentally, this is the area where Nato planners feel that a threat from weapons of mass destruction might arise in future.

Instead of facing an assault from the east towards Western Europe, the sites for the new vaults in Greece and Turkey are closer to countries such as Iraq and Libya, which are seen as potential launch-sites for nuclear, biological and chemical weapons.

The number of vaults planned at Greek and Turkish bases is likely to be smaller than planned in 1987, when 11 were planned at Araxos, in Greece and 30 at Incirlik, near Adana, Turkey, and six each at Murted and Balikesir.

Black-out chaos adds to Madrid airport woes

Elizabeth Nash
Madrid

Attendants were handwriting passengers' check-in details by 'spedlight' this week following a power black-out that paralysed Barajas airport, Madrid, for five hours, prompting the Transport Minister, Rafael Arias Salgado, to condemn Spain's principal airport, one of the busiest in Europe, as "like the Third World".

It was the worst of three black-outs during a week of mounting chaos that has caused spiralling delays in all flights, and cancellations in the peak pre-Christmas season. As the weekend approached, the situation worsened. Mr Salgado announced that the nearby military airbase at Torrejon would be commandeered for civilian planes.

The base, destined for Nato use when Spain becomes a full member next year, is expected

to start taking the overspill within a fortnight. Passengers will have to check in at Barajas then be bussed along 8km of choked motorway. Torrejon's runway is at right angles to that of Barajas, so flight paths will intersect.

Tuesday's black-out was caused by a fire after a workman drove an excavator's drill through a 14,000-volt high-tension cable. Back-up generators and other emergency measures failed to operate. On Thursday an Iberia plane overran the runway and stuck in the mud, causing panic when an exit door stuck.

Madrid's only airport is 65 years old, has two congested runways, and work on the third is five years overdue. Regional authorities are slowly waking up to the need for a second airport.

The state airline, Iberia, fiercely opposes a second airport, insisting a single connecting point is vital for its international network. Anyone who uses Barajas regularly can testify to Iberia's clout. Flights from far cheaper private carriers are routinely bumped from their slots by Iberia.

Mr Arias Salgado blames the previous government for the chaos, saying the Socialists delayed a report on the environmental consequences of expansion for two years. Josep Borrell, the former Socialist Public Works Minister, criticised Mr Arias Salgado for his "irresponsibility and manifest inability to confront the problems of air traffic".

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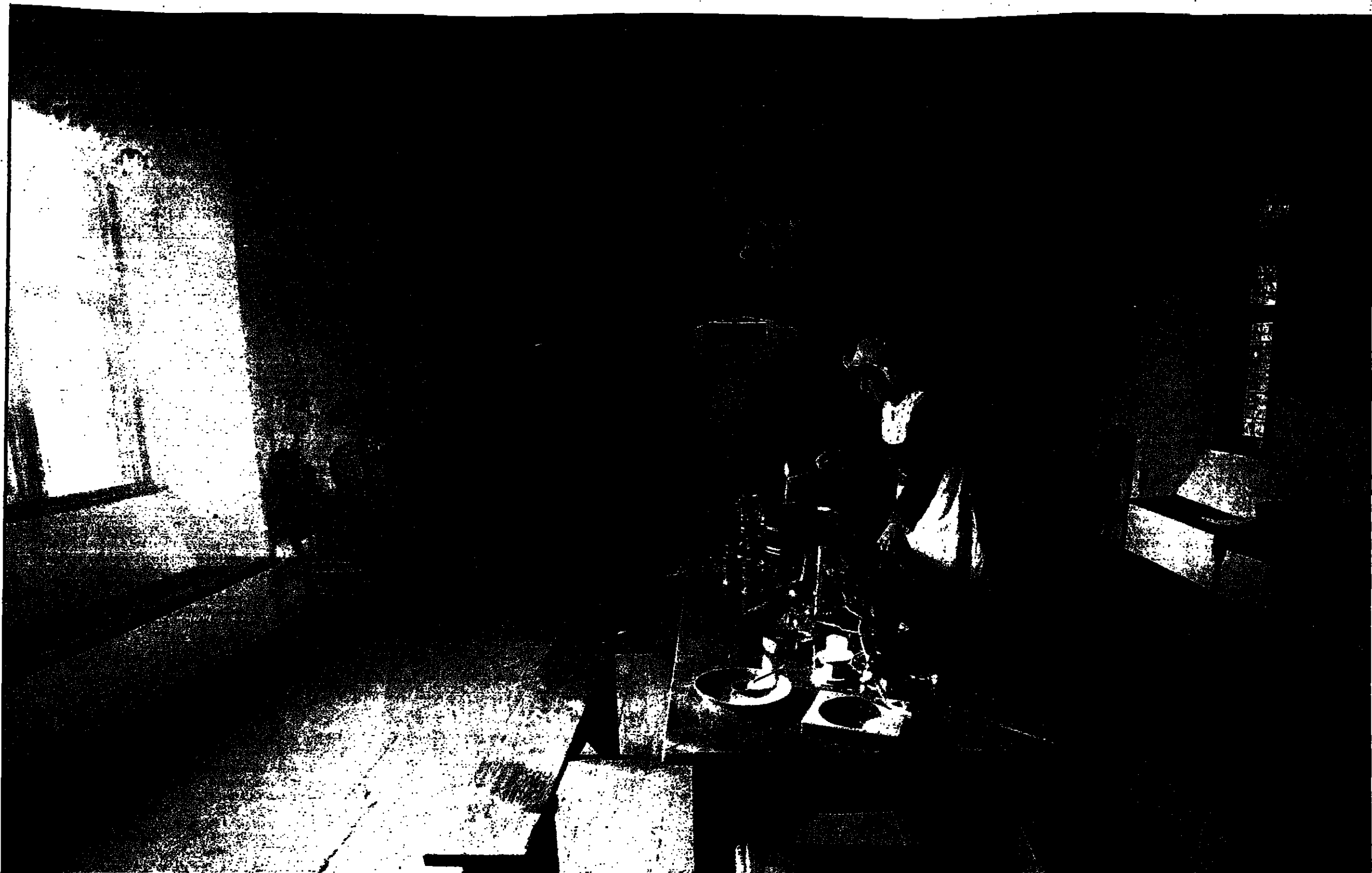
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The re-creation of Christmas past. The Great Hall at Sulgrave Manor, Banbury, Oxford is decked out in mock Tudor. Photograph by John Voos. Nikon FM2, 20mm lens, 1/15 sec at F2.8, ASA 800 multi-speed film

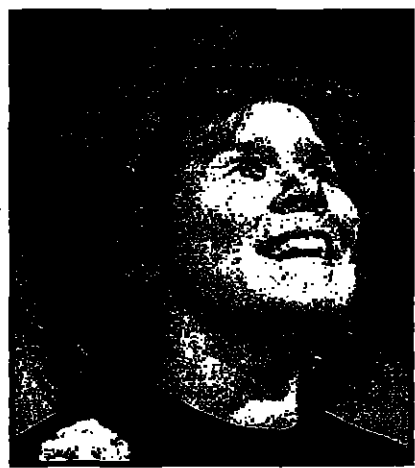


the long weekend

THE INDEPENDENT • SATURDAY 14 DECEMBER 1996

It's surprising how even the most sophisticated of us adhere to the idea of a traditional Christmas. We may shop in Tesco and buy technological gewgaws but the lure of cosy firesides and tables groaning with Dickensian fare, however unreal, is irresistible. Inside we discover that we still decorate trees – whatever the expense – and play games, even if they bear little resemblance to those played in pre-TV days. And children still flock to Santa's grotto. The traditions are preserved – as long as they remain commercially viable.

interview



John Walsh meets... Imelda Staunton

She plays the sexy high-kicker from the Hot Box club. Off stage she's a Celt with angry blue eyes **page 3**

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arts & books

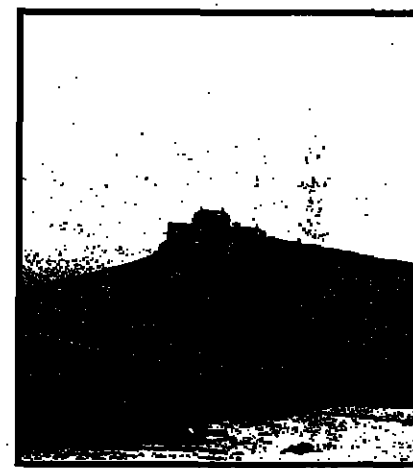


The passion, the venom, the grandeur

Robin Cook MP on a literary look at Parliament which fails to match his own vision **page 6**

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travel



Big seas, big winds, a pig and a pot

Harriet O'Brien finds Cornwall in winter inspiring, exhilarating and – best of all – half empty **page 9**

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consuming



What the tree says about our lives

The first was made by some lads at an office party in Latvia in 1510. It has been changing ever since **page 15**

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If your boss has given you Christmas day off...

Pop the cork! Release the Cava!
You will find Cava is just made for celebrations, and the more spontaneous the better.
For one thing, you can rely on its natural sparkle and super quality. For another, it's incredible value for money.

Cava is the sparkling wine from Spain that is made by the traditional method. It comes from a land of rolling hills and valleys near Barcelona, where there's plenty of sunshine and moderate rainfall.
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As well as being light, delicate and fragrant, Cava wines have a distinctive smoothness and crisp dryness.
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No wonder Cava's so keen to get in the glass when you open it!



CASTELLBLANCH - CONDE DE CARALT - FREIXENET - SEGURA VIUDAS

In pursuit of fun and frolics

Chris Maslanka picks his 12 games of Christmas

There is one golden rule for playing games at Christmas – don't add to any potential stress by choosing the wrong sort of game. Match the players to the game. Here are 12 of the best.

The simple and soothing jigsaw (p2) despite its vulnerability to the vacuum cleaner and association with the sick room, is still very much with us. The *Agatha Christie Death on the Nile Mystery Jigsaw* (Paul Lamond, 750 pieces, age 12+, £8.99) attempts to carry the jigsaw off with the crime novel. Which clues lead Hercule Poirot to see through the alibi? As with an Agatha Christie proper, I suspect people will find arriving at the solution more satisfying than the solution itself. For the Captain Hastings of this world the solution is in the booklet but, as befits the mystery, in mirror writing.

The *Enid Blyton Sea Adventure Mystery Jigsaw* is similar but for children (Paul Lamond, big pieces, 250 of them, £6.99). Interestingly, the nine-year-old testers found it frustrating without a picture to guide them.

Best catered for were the younger children with the *Elmer Giant Floor Puzzle* (Paul Lamond, 22 pieces, aged 2+, £6.99). It was three-year-old Sarah's first jigsaw and she loved the colourful and differently-patterned elephants. With only a little help she could reconstruct it herself. Keen followers of Barbie's fantastic lifestyle may appreciate one of the Barbie puzzles (Spears, 100-150 pieces, age 6+, £3.99).

Visuo-spatial matching, so important in jigsaws, is the means by which *My First Scrabble Words* (Spears, 1-4 players, age 3+, £9.99) impacts spelling. Is the child really spelling when she matches colours and shapes? No, but it doesn't matter, as the child is becoming familiar with the process of assembling letters to make words. The use of an already-developed skill (colour- and shape-matching) as a stepping stone to learning a new skill (spelling) is a sound educational and psychological principle. The puzzles can be solved by trial and error

without adult help: if it don't fit, it ain't right!

The *Oxford Game* (Falcon, 2-6 players, age 14+, £35.00) tests spelling and the meaning of words à la *Call My Bluff*. The three levels of difficulty make it possible for children to play with adults, though I doubt whether children would play this on their own. The spelling part was unpopular with my more dyslexic guests but very popular with those who confused knowing the meaning of rare words with linguistic skill. (p2)

Spears' *Don't Panic* (2-4 players, age 8+, £13.00) is a family party game with simple rules. The object is to think up items belonging to a given category while a noisy timer counts down from 10 and paralyzes your thinking. There are two levels of difficulty: hard for adults (names of liqueurs, famous statues) and easy for children (football teams, green things). Children can play on their own, but there can be some controversy as to whether an item belongs to a category or not, so watch out for arguments. (p2)

Not to be confused with *The Oxford Game*, *Oxford Games* is a Buckinghamshire-based company producing a wide range of beautifully-designed classic and historically-based games. *Tabula* (2 players, £12.95) is an alleged forerunner of backgammon played throughout the Roman empire from the beginning of the 1st century. It was said that the Emperor Claudius was so addicted that he had a tabula board installed in his chariot (presumably chariot-race was not a problem in ancient Rome). (p2)

Trivial Pursuit in its many guises is still the king of after-dinner quizzes. The latest two



are *Trivial Pursuit Genius Edition* (M & B, age 15+, £36) and *Trivial Pursuit Annual* (1997) Edition (age 15+, £18). The use of the word "trivial" in the title is a stroke of genius. It means that if you don't know the answers, it doesn't matter. If the sad character who knows all the answers (cos he's played it on his own many times) annoys you, remind him not to confuse facts with knowledge – it's only a game! (p2)

True or False (M & B, 2-6 players, no age guide, £24) is a variant of the trivial pursuit-type quizzes. You have a 50:50 chance of getting it right so there's less chance to show off and more chance to revel in the fascinating facts

and check your gullibility, eg Crying was considered manly or tough in the Middle Ages – true or false? Answer: true – eat your heart out Paul Gascoigne! (p2)

One of the encouraging aspects of the Nineties has been the rise of the pub quiz. Paul Lamond's *Burns and Porter – Pub Trivia Quiz* (2-20 players, age 18+, £6.99) contains a good selection – 20 sets of 20 questions, e.g. Which Avenger shook the coffee beans for Nescafé in 1987? (Gareth Hunt). (p2)

Of more questionable benefit was the emergence of the national lottery and scratch-card fever. Those who played *Lottery* last year and who like popular music will

no doubt become addicted to Paul Lamond's *Music Scratch-Card Trivia* (no age specified) where the answers are revealed by scratching the card. (p2)

Reminiscing, 1960s-1990s (Paul Lamond, 2-4 players, age 12+, £16.99) is an after-dinner game with simple rules and good questions. It gives you the opportunity to pretend you're younger than you are or to bond with others through shared memories. The game reminds me of a designer version of the psychological therapies used to consolidate pockets of lucidity in dementia sufferers. So perhaps it also offers you an opportunity to check that none of your marbles is missing. (p2)

If your marbles are indeed absent, *Wacky Washer* (Spears, 2-4 players, age 4+, £16) may be your thing. The object of this dice game is to pop all your replica foam clothes (socks, T-shirts, trousers) into a washing machine before they get spun out again. The children loved it. I look forward to an adult version using real clothes and a spin dryer – a cross between roulette and strip poker. To avoid tears on Christmas morning, note that batteries are not included. (p2)

Atmosfear – The Soul Rangers (Spears, 3-6 players, age 12-adult, £18.00) is more sinister than wacky. You'll need a video and TV (which doesn't come with the box) and also the board from the

original *Harbingers* game, to which this is an add-on. Little horrors will love it. (p2)

By contrast, *Enchanted Forest* (Ravensburger, 2-6 players, age 6+, £9.99) is a quiet, thoughtful game children can play with adults or alone. The artwork is attractive and the instructions easy to follow. You have to travel through the forest finding three treasures. Girls may enjoy this more than boys – it's fairy-tale stuff. (p2)

Adult fantasies are made of sterner stuff, as the award-winning *Forest* demonstrates (Spears, 2-4 players, age 10+, £27). You'll deserve an award too if you can understand the rules after Christmas pudding. It's a war game requiring cool planning and strategy (so don't drink before playing). The girls I played it with couldn't get into it – they couldn't understand why we weren't sharing our armies so everyone could win. (p2)

If you're a bit of a nobby-pamby like me and you'd rather get on with people than grab their flags, you may enjoy *Compatibility* (Spears, 3-6 players, age 12+, £20) where you check the overlap between your associations and those of your partner (you know, like table-chair; windscreen-wiper). (p2)

If war games, social bonding, shared lunacy or reminiscing leave you cold and you have a compatibility problem, you may wish to retire to a neutral corner and indulge in a solitary pursuit. I recommend the beautifully-made *Lagoon* puzzles, such as *Soma Cube* (£16). It comprises seven improbable and aesthetically appealing pieces which assemble to make a cube and 17 other shapes, rather like a 3-D tangram, or *Grand Master* (£14) a tile-sliding puzzle. (p2) With any luck, by the time you've mastered these two puzzles, the 12 days of Christmas will be long gone.

KEY: p = quiet; f = noisy; it = disturb the neighbours; * = almost irritatingly offensive; as = handle with care; ds = have a Recluse counsellor handy.

Games People Play...

No 2. Richard Chivers, 50, barrister (whose name we have had to change, for fear of embarrassing his colleagues in chambers)

Did I tell you what happened to me in Northern Ireland the other day? A client of mine said: "Richard, I understand you enjoy shooting." My entry in *Who's Who*, I think, which is fictional. "Shooting?" – "Aye, wi' a gun." Shooting isn't really games is it?

Diplomacy, how about that? It's a bit boring, I suppose. Each person starts off with a country in 1914. Every move is made at the same time as everyone else, so there's no hanging about waiting to go. To be successful you have to have backing or you're let down, so you make alliances with people. Then you have to judge carefully when to ditch your friend, because once you've done that, you're not trustworthy.

There's a lot less luck than usual, actually I don't think there's any luck at all, it just depends how much support you get. In the end the aim is to conquer the world, so you've got to let your allies down, but you don't want to do it too soon. Generally Russia seems to win.

I haven't played it since I was at Cambridge. I used to play with my friend Johnny and his then wife. His wife made Bombay Duck. She didn't realise you have to deep fry it. Have you eaten raw duck? It rather ruins your concentration. I haven't played Diplomacy since.

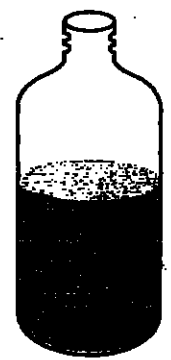
It's the same as the horse game really. If you're driving along and you see a horse and claim it, you get a point. If you wrongly claim a horse because it's a cow, you lose a point, and whoever spotted your mistake gets a point. But if they're wrong, you can get two points by claiming a mistaken mistake. It doesn't sound much fun, does it?

Diplomacy, from Gibsons Games, costs £17.99. A Deluxe edition is available only in the United States. Bombay Duck is a type of fish.

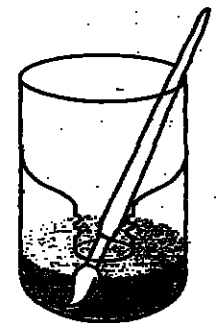
Pandora Molly

Don't junk it ... use it!

Nasty, messy things children. They spill drinks and knock over grubby bowls of water that they are using to rinse their paint-brushes. Here's a child-proof, spill-proof way around the problem.



1 Take plastic bottle emptied on the previous occasion that messy child spilt its drink. Cut off top just above the half-way mark.



2 Invert severed top into bottom half. Push down firmly to create good seal (glue if you feel particularly insecure). You now have a simple, spill-proof container, which will hold its contents (if not over-filled) even if knocked over entirely.

For added amusement, watch child trying to drink from it without a straw.

Bawn O'Seime-Ranagh

Whatever happened to: conspicuous consumption?



The year: 1981 – Geoffrey Howe deflates (what a horrible prospect) and sets in train the agenda for the 80s, culminating in Nigel Lawson's budget of 1987. A consumer's paradise: low taxation, high credit.

The effects: Huge shopping malls appear on our streets, justified by 51m Christmas bonuses from Goldman Sachs. Also Pifofuxes, braces, Porsche's, champagne, big advertising budgets, big dresses (with pads), finding yourself (amidst the pads) and saying things like 'I need to revise certain aspects of my personality'.

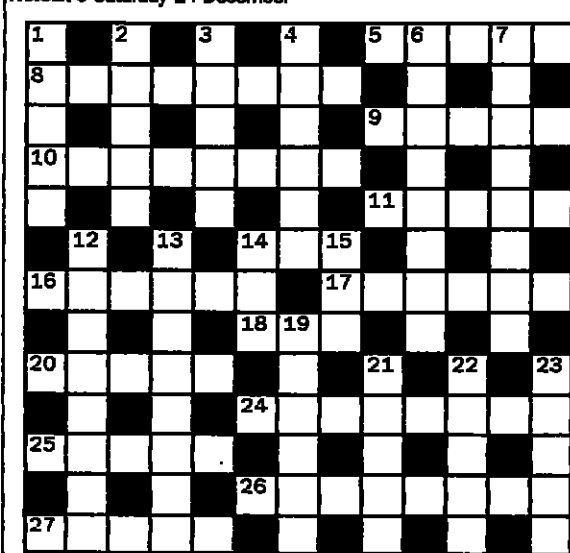
What next? The economy busts – big time. Lamont's budget of 1992 recognises that all is not well, with thousands stuck in a negative equity trap, record unemployment and a balance of payments deficit of unimaginable, unmanageable, proportions. Investment, or even saving becomes the norm. Some even seem embarrassed by money. They close their accounts at the local sun-dried tomato store. In Margaret Thatcher's words a "new liverish left wing Puritanism" takes over, condemning the eighties. Greed is good becomes green is good.

The here and now Britain's dire exit from the ERM becomes a policy to secure maximum economic growth. The phrase "what's wrong with wanting to have a Porsche in the drive and a few bottles of bubbly after work?" returns to common currency, as heard in a city bar last week, and this week Harrods sell 30 hampers at £1,000 each to a single buyer. So are the 80s back? Something might have a braking effect on the economy and prevent this. Venturing to the shops one might trip over that other aspect of conspicuous consumption: the people lying in their doorways.

James Auerast

concise crossword

No.3170 Saturday 14 December



- ACROSS**
- Defensive ditches (5)
 - Shafts of light (8)
 - Pastoral poem (5)
 - Antbear (8)
 - Church members other than ministers (5)
 - Stretch of salt water (3)
 - Work by More (6)
 - Walk like duck (6)
 - Chum (3)
 - Group of pupils (5)
 - Sporty (8)
 - House adjacent to Aston? (5)
 - Martinet (8)
 - Grind teeth (5)
- DOWN**
- Attempt written composition? (5)
 - Trap (5)
 - Gusto (5)
 - Come out (6)
 - People of experience (3,5)
 - Revealing (4,4)
 - Male horse (8)
 - Letters (8)
 - Plant juice (3)
 - Boring instrument (3)
 - Shrewd (6)
 - Timepiece (5)
 - Not fresh (5)
 - Yellow pigment (5)

Solution to yesterday's Concise Crossword:
ACROSS: 1 Checker, 5 Count (Cheque account), 8 Linc, 9 Pretend, 10 Chocolate, 12 Run, 13 Tip-off, 14 Brahms, 17 Woe, 18 Many-sided, 20 Assault, 21 Opera, 23 Horse, 24 Dreaden, DOWN: 1 Colic, 2 Ell, 3 Tip-off, 4 Repeat, 5 Cretie, 6 Uncertainty, 7 Tidings, 11 Oppressor, 15 Towpath, 15 Restore, 16 United, 18 Maure, 19 Drain, 22 End.

Bridge Alan Hiron

Game all; dealer South	
North	♠ J 10 6 2
	♥ 5 4 2
	♦ 7 5 4
	♣ 8 7 5
West	♠ A Q 8 5
	♥ 10 7
	♦ K 10 6 2
	♣ K 10 3
East	♠ 9 4
	♥ A 9 6
	♦ A 8 3
	♣ J 9 6 2
South	♠ K 7 3
	♥ K Q J 8 3
	♦ Q J
	♣ A K 4

Declarer spotted his own mistake on this deal. Unfortunately he saw it about six tricks too late. There was only one simple point in the play and, when you have got it right, you will have done better than a distinguished international who, to be fair, was enjoying a bad day.

The auction could not be described as dramatic. South opened One Heart and neither West nor East felt prepared to take action. West led ♠ 2 and it all looked straightforward to

declarer. It seemed very likely that his opponents' silence was due to their holding balanced hands. In that case, there would be four trump tricks, two clubs, and time to establish a seventh winner in spades.

The defenders continued diamonds and South ruffed the third round. There was, of course, the danger that he might run into a spade ruff but there was no alternative to playing on trumps. East took his ace and, as feared, pushed through a spade for West to take his two winners, after which East trumped the third round. This had the effect of establishing dummy's ♠ J but there was a slight hitch: Declarer had ruffed the third round of diamonds with his three! I trust that you took the precaution of trumping with your eight. Then the table can be entered on the third round of trumps with ♥ 5 and a discard taken on the winning spade. As it was, South ended with only six tricks when he lost a club at trick thirteen.

Perplexity

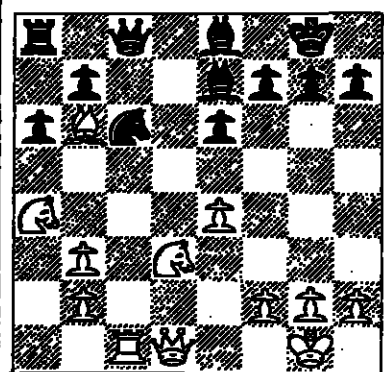
Mixed doubles:
Arch line optima mists cradle men

first correct answer opened on 27 December. Entries to: Perplexity, the Independent, 1 Canada Square, London E14 5DL

The six words above hide three connected one-word answers. To find them, you must group the words into three pairs, then rearrange the letters within each pair. A *Chambers Dictionary* prize will be awarded to the sender of the

30 November answers: elephant (inELegant Pet HAVing a Trunk); rhinoceros (hoRn on His NOse Can bE aphROdisiac); beef (B&E danger Food). Winner: Yvonne Abbess.

Chess William Hartston



It's Black to play in the diagram position. What would you do? The position comes from Topalov-Karpov, played in the second round of the current Las Palmas super-tournament and provides a good illustration of why the players are finding it so hard to beat each other. Despite having level material and no clear weaknesses, Black is under some pressure. He cannot get his rook into play, and White's knights are poised to invade c5 and molest the Q-side pawns. Black would like to get his bishop to c6, but that involves moving the knight, which cannot budge until the queen moves, and the queen has no good square.

Karpov solved the problem neatly with 1...e5! Now 2.Nxc5 is met by 2...Qe6 3.Nxc6 Bxc6 when the double threat of Qxc6 or Bxc6 leaves White nothing better than 4.Nc3 Bxc4 5.Nxc4 Qxc6 when Black stands slightly better. Since 2.Nxc5 Bxc5 3.Nxc5 Nd4 is also perfectly good for Black, Topalov settled for 2.Nc3 Qe6 3.Nd5 Rc8 4.h3 Bc5 5.Qg5 Qg4 6.fxg4 Kf7 7.Nxe7 when a draw was agreed. Stopping inferior positions turning into lost ones is, after all, what true grandmasters do best of all.

TURN TO PAGE 25... for the weather, sky at night, Jasper Rees on TV, Robert Hanks on radio



The big picture

Notorious
Sat 3.05pm BBC2

On the outside, Alfred Hitchcock's greatest film of the 1940s is a spy thriller about suspected Nazis holed up in post-war Brazil. At its dark heart, though, is a perverse love story in which American agent Cary Grant (above) forces Ingrid Bergman (above) the daughter of a Nazi, but a patriotic American who loves Grant) into seducing the leader of the Rio-based Germans, Claude Rains. Terrific suspense, great performances and Ingrid Bergman at her sexiest.

Television preview

Recommended viewing this weekend

by Gerard Gilbert

The weekend before the Christmas schedules begin in earnest is the broadcasters' equivalent of finishing off the scraps - long-running series have to come to a conclusion, and nothing too dainty should be served up to outshine these left-overs. Which nutritional metaphor, as Angus Deayton might say, brings us to *An Italian Christmas* - Recipes from the River Café (Sat BBC2).

The River Café, in Hammersmith, West London - recently described by the *New Yorker* magazine as probably the best Italian restaurant in Europe - is actually more famous for the cookbook which bears its name. This bible of gastronomy (if you happen to have a wood-burning oven and access to top-quality Italian produce, that is) is an indispensable accessory in the home of any self-respecting young urban professional - even if it rests on the coffee table rather than the kitchen shelf. It may not be the sort of tome one turns to after a hard day at the office, but at Christmas it comes into its own - especially if you are looking for an alternative to the dreaded roast turkey and plum pudding. Doesn't polenta with porcini

mushrooms and white truffles, roasted loin of pork and *vin santo* ice-cream sound so much more grown-up? Keith Allen, the former *Comic Strip* comedian who proved himself a strong dramatic presence in the BBC adaptation of *Martin Chuzzlewit*, has always struck me as, what you might call, a naughty boy. And so, it turns out he was expelled from school and was in and out of hospital. Allen's principal memory of his father (an oft-absent Royal Navy submariner) was the thought: "O goodie - dad's away and I can be naughty". This week's *Travels with My Camera* (Sun C4), in which Allen and his father, Eddie, re-visit the scenes of Allen's mispent youth, continues the circle by showing the actor - a surprisingly disciplinarian parent - goading his own son into doing his homework.

TX: Dreamgirls (Sat BBC2) looks at the work of that dark genius of 1970s French *Vogue*, the photographer Guy Bourdin - whose work was the technician twin of Helmut Newton's black-and-white fetishism-as-fashion. Bourdin, who died in 1991, remains a shadowy figure. Mother-obsessed and misogynistic, he helped push the unsuspecting and uncompromising

world of *haute couture* into the realms of hard pornography.

Robert Hughes is at full steam in the ongoing *American Visions* (Sun BBC2). Zig-zagging across the continent and the 1930s, he takes in skyscrapers, Edward Hopper, the social realism of the New Deal artists, the black diaspora northwards, and the hockey vernacular of Grant Wood's *American Gothic*.

Talking of hockey American vernacular - Colonel Oliver North is captured in *A Perfect Candidate* (Sun C4), running to represent Virginia in the 1994 Senate elections. *Primary Colours* it ain't, but the man at the centre of the Iran-Contra arms-for-hostages deal showed a great deal of naïveté in co-opting with him-makers RJ Cutler and David Van Taylor.

Equinox (Sun C4) looks at how the current anti-science populism is endangering vital research. Ironically, given the Vatican's historical antipathy to scientific enlightenment, it is the Pope's medical adviser, Professor Robert White (the only man to have conducted a successful head transplant - on a monkey), who is leading the fight for tolerance.



The big match

Zimbabwe v England
Sun 7am Sky Sports 2

England's cricketers shook off just enough of their winter cobwebs against Malawi last week to make a first of their first ever match against Zimbabwe on Zimbabwean soil - a one-day international at the Queen's club in Bulawayo. Captain Mike Atherton (above) has only scored 13 runs on the tour so far, but opener Nick Knight notched up a century against Malawi and bowler Darren Gough picked up five wickets in the same game. Today's opposition is a step up in class, however.

Saturday television and radio

BBC 1

7.05 *The Pink Panther Show* (R) (1254085).
7.25 *News, Weather* (2970240).
7.30 *Children's BBC: The Mop*. 7.40 *Speed Racer*. 8.05 *The Real Adventures of Jonny Quest*.
8.30 *The New Adventures of Superman* (5588882).
9.15 *Live and Kicking*. Boyzone and Coronation Street actress Liz Dawn guest (34119191).
12.12 *Weather* (121375).
12.15 *Grandstand*. 12.20 *Football Focus*. 1.00 *News*.
1.05 *Racing from Haydock*. 1.15 *Patrons Handicap Steeplechase*. 1.25 *Skiing*. Highlights from the men's downhill in Val d'Isère. 1.40 *Racing from Haydock*. 1.45 *Tote Multibet Handicap Hurdle Race*. 1.55 *Rugby Union*. Preview of today's match between England and Argentina. 2.10 *Racing from Haydock*. 2.15 *Tommy Whittaker Steeplechase*. 2.25 *Rugby Union*. England v Argentina. Live coverage from Twickenham. Commentary from Nigel Stammers-Smith and Bill Beaumont, and the kick-off is at 3pm. 4.45 *Final Score* (66496733).
5.15 *News, Weather* (145733).
5.25 *Regional News and Weather* (609646).
5.30 *The Simpsons*. Lisa falls in love with her substitute teacher (S) (780337).
5.55 *Jim Davidson's Generation Game* (S) (338191).
6.55 *Noel's House Party*. Uri Geller earns a Gotcha (S) (703801).
7.50 *The National Lottery Live*. Art Garfunkel sings "Bridge over Troubled Water" (S) (759199).
8.05 *Casualty*. Traditional pre-Christmas drink-driving storyline (S) (594004).
8.55 *News and Sport, Weather* (Followed by *National Lottery Update*) (885882).
9.15 *Blind Date* (R) (211356).
10.05 *One Foot in the Grave* (213566).
10.45 *Match of the Day*. Liverpool v Middlesbrough is the main event, followed by highlights of the World Cup qualifiers featuring Wales v Turkey and Northern Ireland v Albania (127426).
11.35 *The Stand-Up Show*. More hopefuls go through their stand-up patter (S) (438789).
12.05 *Top of the Pops*. As shown yesterday (R) (2304115).
12.35 *The Interim Project* (Ken Hughes 1974 UK). Not brilliant, but original and underrated thriller which sees James Coburn as a professor of economics who is offered a top US government post as long as he eliminates the skeletons in his past - four spies in his European industrial espionage network. His plan is to get them to kill each other. Lee Grant, Harry Anderson, Ian Hendry and Michael Jayston co-star (3440405).
2.00 *Weather* (1741937). To 2.05am.
REGIONS. Wales: 1.55pm World Cup Football: Wales v Turkey. Scots: 2.25pm Rugby Union: Scotland v Italy. N.I.: 11.35pm Match of the Day from Northern Ireland. 12.25 *The Hole in the Wall*. 1.00 *The Stand-Up Show*. 1.30 *Top of the Pops*. 2.00 *Weather*.

BBC 2

7.10 *The Saint Meets the Tiger* (Paul Stain 1943 US). Hugh Sinclair as the Leslie Charteris hero, taking on gold smugglers (3684424).
8.20 *Open University: Women, Children and Work* (3675608). 9.10 *Seeing Through Maths* (4747207). 9.35 *Norfolk Broads: Conservation v Commercialism* (2776882).
10.00 *Chanakya*. Indian historical epic (S) (2008207).
10.35 *Network East* (S) (3568153).
11.20 *Q Asia* (7713066).
11.50 *Film 96 With Barry Norman* (S) (9102820).
12.20 *Top Hat* (Mark Sandrich 1935 US). Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers dancing cheek to cheek through lovely art deco sets in this, their quintessential musical together. Eleven Irving Berlin songs in all, as the plot of the Gay Divorcee is recycled and sent to Venice (665733).
1.55 *Intermezzo* (Gregory Ratoff 1939 US). David O. Selznick introduced his new foreign import, Ingrid Bergman, to the American public by playing it safe and remaking a film Bergman had previous had a hit with in Sweden. She is the piano teacher who begins an affair with the father (Leslie Howard) of one of her pupils. Synopsi stuff, washed down with Brahms, Liszt and Grieg (8864356).
3.05 *Notorious* (Alfred Hitchcock 1946 US). See *The big picture*, above (19584269).
4.45 *TOTP 2* (S) (1974795).
5.30 *Bhowani Junction* (George Cukor 1956 UK). The last days of the Raj - and Anglo-Indian Ayia Gardner is getting grief from Stewart Granger and his pure Brit pals. Fine melodrama capturing the political mood of the times (2758027).
7.15 *News and Sport, Weather* (342172).
7.30 *Making Movies*. To mark the 100th anniversary of the invention of the movie, the story of its inventor, Guglielmo Marconi (S) (667820).
8.20 *What the Papers Say*. With Steve Richards of the *New Statesman* (S) (912375).
8.30 *An Italian Christmas - Recipes from the River Café*. See *Preview*, above (S) (5646).
9.00 *Have I Got News for You* (S) (6356).
9.30 *TX, Dreamgirls: The Photographs of Guy Bourdin*. See *Preview*, above (S) (206085).
10.20 *Crucial Tales*. "Phoenix" by Rohan Leslie, about a half-Irish, half-Pakistani man whose parents and sister are killed in an arson attack. Last of these dramas by black and Asian talent (109795).
10.50 *Later with Jools Holland*. With Suede, Alexander O'Neal and Ray Davies (S) (393017).
11.50 *10 x 10: Melvyn's Panel* (S) (100427).
12.00 *Jungle Fever* (Spike Lee 1991 US). Lee's examination of interracial love - in this case, between married and upwardly mobile African-American architect Wesley Snipes and his Italian-American secretary, Annabella Sciorra (Followed by *Weatherview*) (S) (16661776). To 2.15am.
REGIONS. Scots: 10.20pm Tartan Shorts. 10.40 *Crucial Tales*. 11.10 *Later with Jools Holland*. 12.10 *Film: Jungle Fever*.

ITV/London

6.00 *GMTV*. 6.00 *News*. 6.10 *Mole in the Hole*. 6.30 *Professor Bubble*. 6.50 *Bug Alert*. 7.10 *Disney's Wake Up in the Wild Room*. 8.20 *Gargoyles*.
9.25 *Wow* (S) (36887375).
11.00 *The Noise*. The Spice Girls and Gary Barlow are the guests (S) (3646).
11.30 *The Chart Show*. Howard Jones in the Video Vault (S) (52288).
12.30 *Champions of the Future*. Young go-karters with Formula One-sized ambitions (39277).
1.00 *News and Weather* (82135882).
1.05 *Local News, Weather* (82134153).
1.10 *Movies, Games and Videos*. 101 *Dalmatians*, is inevitably, up for review (5708153).
1.45 *The Making of Star Trek: First Contact*. Movie plug (21265530).
2.10 *Hatari!* (Howard Hawks 1962 US). Leisurely and generally underrated late-Hawkins adventure about the lives and loves of a group of animal trappers in East Africa. John Wayne, Elsa Martinelli and Red Buttons star (22231177).
4.45 *News, Sports Results, Weather* (S) (950356).
5.05 *London Tonight*. Sports Results (Followed by *LWT Weather*) (8837530).
5.20 *Cartoon Time* (6076795).
5.30 *Sabrina, the Teenage Witch* (820).
6.00 *Gladiators* (S) (14998).
6.00 *Blind Date* (S) (2269).
8.00 *Family Fortunes* (Including Lottery Result) (S) (3527).
8.30 *ITN News, Weather, Lottery Result* (Followed by *LWT Weather*) (800191).
8.45 *Batman Returns* (Tim Burton 1992 US). Fans of beautiful women zipped into skintight leathers will possibly get most out of Tim Burton's second foray into Gotham City, as Michael Keaton's caped crusader battles Danny DeVito's Penguin and - more ambiguously - Michelle Pfeiffer's Catwoman. Actually, there is a lot to admire here - most especially on the design side, although the script also crackles with Burton's trademark perversity wit. Christopher Walken, Michael Gough and Michael Murphy are in the support cast (S) (9590646).
11.00 *Digance in a Field of His Own*. "Richard Digance entertains an audience of 800 with his witty stories, songs and poetry." Just passing that on (S) (21375).
12.00 *A House of Secrets and Lies* (Paul Schneider 1992 US). Connie Sellecca plays a successful TV presenter who is persecuted by one of her on-air guests that she should no longer tolerate husband Kevin Dobson's womanising. Dial "T" for therapy (886937).
1.50 *Funny Business* (S) (2672467).
2.20 *The Chart Show* (R) (3883776).
3.10 *ET News Review* (5033738).
4.00 *The Best of God's Gift* (R) (3590554).
4.50 *Night Shift* (R) (31126015).
5.05 *Coach* (R) (S) (169863). To 5.30am.

Channel 4

6.00 *Early Morning: Sesame Street* (R) (78882).
7.00 *The Magic School Bus* (R) (S) (10269).
7.30 *Really Wild Animals* (1108172).
7.55 *Hong Kong Phooey* (R) (4183240).
8.05 *King Arthur and the Knights of Justice* (R) (737298).
8.35 *Hang Time* (S) (6932172).
9.00 *The Morning Line* (S) (18998).
10.00 *Greatest Football Moments*. Serie A preview (28288).
11.00 *Bliff Gidion* review (S) (69004).
12.00 *Sign On* (S) (7838).
12.30 *Inside the Vatican*. Sir Peter Ustinov is your guide, this week slacked-jawed in wonderment at De Vinci and Michelangelo's interior decor (R) (9074578).
1.20 *Madame O'Hara*. Animation (82142172).
1.30 *Racing from Cheltenham*. Brough Scott introduces the 1.55 Bonaparte Hurdle. 2.30 Tripleprint Gold Cup Handicap Chase. 3.05 Doubleprint Novices' Chase and the 3.40 Lonsome Glory Hurdle (S) (9301074).
4.05 *Melissa on Thames*. Repeat Witness film about the Arabid community which has settled around the Edgware Road and Queensway area of north-west London (R) (S) (1083172).
5.05 *Brookside Omnibus*. *Aka The Simpsons* (S) (4123556).
6.30 *Right to Reply* (S) (960269).
7.10 *A Week in Politics*. Vincent Hanna and Andrew Rawnsley produce the week's wryest politics show on the box (S) (762714).
8.00 *The Saga of Life*. Last in the short series of programmes charting the life and career of Lennart Nilsson, looking at the revolutionary skills that eventually enabled him to take pictures of the unborn child (S) (9639).
9.00 *ER*. Greene treats a youngster who may need open-heart surgery (R) (S) (47207).
9.55 *Jo Brand - through the Calhoun*. Gaby Roslin, Mark Larnar, Steve Cogan and Anna Stubbs join in a spoof game show (R) (S) (963820).
10.25 *NYPD Blue* (R) (S) (810462).
11.25 *The Party* (Brian De Palma 1978 US). De Palma's follow-up to *Candy* also involves teenagers with psychic powers - this one sees Andrew Stevens being kidnapped by government agent John Cassavetes, who's intent on harnessing the lad's kinetic powers for national security purposes. De Palma at his most cold and Hitchcockian, but his obsession with surface style is beguiling in the end. Kirk Douglas and Amy Irving also star (61910578).
1.35 *Late Lencake: Munga* (S) (6137301).
2.35 *The New Twilight Zone*. A boy makes the shocking discovery of an evil force known as the Shadow Man living under his bed (S) (9941955).
3.05 *United States of Television*. Porn channels, the Republican Party's "GOP TV" broadcasts and interactive TV shopping (R) (S) (5043115).
3.50 *Mr Don and Mr George* (R) (S) (9018283).
4.20 *The Real World* (S) (3592912). To 5.15am.

ITV/Regions

AREA 1
As London except: 12.30pm *Movies, Games and Videos* (39207). 1.15 *Film: E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial* (704254). 3.05 *Cartoon* (896172). 3.15 *Film: Baywatch* (Shattered) (592443). 12.00 *Film: The Tower* (402757). 1.40am *Cartoon Knowledge* (6986405). 2.35am *Film: Project: Tin Man* (692641). 3.45am *Film: Heller Steller* (545283). 4.30 *Coach* (41347). 5.00-5.30am *World of Sailing* (72660).

AREA 2
As London except: 12.30pm *Premiere* (39207). 1.10 *Cartoon Time* (6921356). 1.25 *Dinosaurus* (30246714). 1.55 *Cartoon Mix* (2125266). 2.25 *Movies: Games and Videos* (82614153). 2.55 *Film: The Plank* (789379). 3.50 *Alfred* (691646). 5.10 *Goals Extra* (5131530). 4.50am *Johnnie* (78907641). 5.20-5.30am *Asian Eye* (1943660).

AREA 3
As London except: 12.30pm *Movies, Games and Videos* (39207). 1.10 *Cartoon Time* (6921356). 1.25 *Dinosaurus* (30246714). 1.55 *Cartoon Mix* (2125266). 2.25 *Movies: Games and Videos* (82614153). 2.55 *Film: The Plank* (789379). 3.50 *Alfred* (691646). 5.10 *Goals Extra* (5131530). 4.50am *Johnnie* (78907641). 5.20-5.30am *Asian Eye* (1943660).

AREA 4
As London except: 12.30pm *Movies, Games and Videos* (39207). 1.10 *Cartoon Time* (6921356). 1.25 *Dinosaurus* (30246714). 1.55 *Cartoon Mix* (2125266). 2.25 *Movies: Games and Videos* (82614153). 2.55 *Film: The Plank* (789379). 3.50 *Alfred* (691646). 5.10 *Goals Extra* (5131530). 4.50am *Johnnie* (78907641). 5.20-5.30am *Asian Eye* (1943660).

AREA 5
As London except: 12.30pm *Movies, Games and Videos* (39207). 1.10 *Cartoon Time* (6921356). 1.25 *Dinosaurus* (30246714). 1.55 *Cartoon Mix* (2125266). 2.25 *Movies: Games and Videos* (82614153). 2.55 *Film: The Plank* (789379). 3.50 *Alfred* (691646). 5.10 *Goals Extra* (5131530). 4.50am *Johnnie* (78907641). 5.20-5.30am *Asian Eye* (1943660).

AREA 6
As London except: 12.30pm *Movies, Games and Videos* (39207). 1.10 *Cartoon Time* (6921356). 1.25 *Dinosaurus* (30246714). 1.55 *Cartoon Mix* (2125266). 2.25 *Movies: Games and Videos* (82614153). 2.55 *Film: The Plank* (789379). 3.50 *Alfred* (691646). 5.10 *Goals Extra* (5131530). 4.50am *Johnnie* (78907641). 5.20-5.30am *Asian Eye* (1943660).

AREA 7
As London except: 12.30pm *Movies, Games and Videos* (39207). 1.10 *Cartoon Time* (6921356). 1.25 *Dinosaurus* (30246714). 1.55 *Cartoon Mix* (2125266). 2.25 *Movies: Games and Videos* (82614153). 2.55 *Film: The Plank* (789379). 3.50 *Alfred* (691646). 5.10 *Goals Extra* (5131530). 4.50am *Johnnie* (78907641). 5.20-5.30am *Asian Eye* (1943660).

AREA 8
As London except: 12.30pm *Movies, Games and Videos* (39207). 1.10 *Cartoon Time* (6921356). 1.25 *Dinosaurus* (30246714). 1.55 *Cartoon Mix* (2125266). 2.25 *Movies: Games and Videos* (82614153). 2.55 *Film: The Plank* (789379). 3.50 *Alfred* (691646). 5.10 *Goals Extra* (5131530). 4.50am *Johnnie* (78907641). 5.20-5.30am *Asian Eye* (1943660).

AREA 9
As London except: 12.30pm *Movies, Games and Videos* (39207). 1.10 *Cartoon Time* (6921356). 1.25 *Dinosaurus* (30246714). 1.55 *Cartoon Mix* (2125266). 2.25 *Movies: Games and Videos* (82614153). 2.55 *Film: The Plank* (789379). 3.50 *Alfred* (691646). 5.10 *Goals Extra* (5131530). 4.50am *Johnnie* (78907641). 5.20-5.30am *Asian Eye* (1943660).

AREA 10
As London except: 12.30pm *Movies, Games and Videos* (39207). 1.10 *Cartoon Time* (6921356). 1.25 *Dinosaurus* (30246714). 1.55 *Cartoon Mix* (2125266). 2.25 *Movies: Games and Videos* (82614153). 2.55 *Film: The Plank* (789379). 3.50 *Alfred* (691646). 5.10 *Goals Extra* (5131530). 4.50am *Johnnie* (78907641). 5.20-5.30am *Asian Eye* (1943660).

AREA 11
As London except: 12.30pm *Movies, Games and Videos* (39207). 1.10 *Cartoon Time* (6921356). 1.25 *Dinosaurus* (30246714). 1.55 *Cartoon Mix* (2125266). 2.25 *Movies: Games and Videos* (82614153). 2.55 *Film: The Plank* (789379). 3.50 *Alfred* (691646). 5.10 *Goals Extra* (5131530). 4.50am *Johnnie* (78907641). 5.20-5.30am *Asian Eye* (1943660).

AREA 12
As London except: 12.30pm *Movies, Games and Videos* (39207). 1.10 *Cartoon Time* (6921356). 1.25 *Dinosaurus* (30246714). 1.55 *Cartoon Mix* (2125266). 2.25 *Movies: Games and Videos* (82614153). 2.55 *Film: The Plank* (789379). 3.50 *Alfred* (691646). 5.10 *Goals Extra* (5131530). 4.50am *Johnnie* (78907641). 5.20-5.30am *Asian Eye* (1943660).

AREA 13
As London except: 12.30pm *Movies, Games and Videos* (39207). 1.10 *Cartoon Time* (6921356). 1.25 *Dinosaurus* (30246714). 1.55 *Cartoon Mix* (2125266). 2.25 *Movies: Games and Videos* (82614153). 2.55 *Film: The Plank* (789379). 3.50 *Alfred* (691646). 5.10 *Goals Extra* (5131530). 4.50am *Johnnie* (78907641). 5.20-5.30am *Asian Eye* (1943660).

AREA 14
As London except: 12.30pm *Movies, Games and Videos* (39207). 1.10 *Cartoon Time* (6921356). 1.25 *Dinosaurus* (30246714). 1.55 *Cartoon Mix* (2125266). 2.25 *Movies: Games and Videos* (82614153). 2.55 *Film: The Plank* (789379). 3.50 *Alfred* (691646). 5.10 *Goals Extra* (5131530). 4.50am *Johnnie* (78907641). 5.20-5.30am *Asian Eye* (1943660).

AREA 15
As London except: 12.30pm *Movies, Games and Videos* (39207). 1.10 *Cartoon Time* (6921356). 1.25 *Dinosaurus* (30246714). 1.55 *Cartoon Mix* (2125266). 2.25 *Movies: Games and Videos* (82614153). 2.55 *Film: The Plank* (789379). 3.50 *Alfred* (691646). 5.10 *Goals Extra* (5131530). 4.50am *Johnnie* (78907641). 5.20-5.30am *Asian Eye* (1943660).

AREA 16
As London except: 12.30pm *Movies, Games and Videos* (39207). 1.10 *Cartoon Time* (6921356). 1.25 *Dinosaurus* (30246714). 1.55 *Cartoon Mix* (2125266). 2.25 *Movies: Games and Videos* (82614153). 2.55 *Film: The Plank* (789379). 3.50 *Alfred* (691646). 5.10 *Goals Extra* (5131530). 4.50am *Johnnie* (78907641). 5.20-5.30am *Asian Eye* (1943660).

AREA 17
As London except: 12.30pm *Movies, Games and Videos* (39207). 1.10 *Cartoon Time* (6921356). 1.25 *Dinosaurus* (30246714). 1.55 *Cartoon Mix* (2125266). 2.25 *Movies: Games and Videos* (82614153). 2.55 *Film: The Plank* (789379). 3.50 *Alfred* (691646). 5.10 *Goals Extra* (5131530). 4.50am *Johnnie* (78907641). 5.20-5.30am *Asian Eye* (1943660).

AREA 18
As London except: 12.30pm *Movies, Games and Videos* (39207). 1.10 *Cartoon Time* (6921356). 1.25 *Dinosaurus* (30246714). 1.55 *Cartoon Mix* (2125266). 2.25 *Movies: Games and Videos* (82614153). 2.55 *Film: The Plank* (789379). 3.50 *Alfred* (691646). 5.10 *Goals Extra* (5131530). 4.50am *Johnnie* (78907641). 5.20-5.30am *Asian Eye* (1943660).

AREA 19
As London except: 12.30pm *Movies, Games and Videos* (39207). 1.10 *Cartoon Time* (6921356). 1.25 *Dinosaurus* (30246714). 1.55 *Cartoon Mix* (2125266). 2.25 *Movies: Games and Videos* (82614153). 2.55 *Film: The Plank* (789379). 3.50 *Alfred* (691646). 5.10 *Goals Extra* (5131530). 4.50am *Johnnie* (78907641). 5.20-5.30am *Asian Eye* (1943660).

AREA 20
As London except: 12.30pm *Movies, Games and Videos* (39207). 1.10 *Cartoon Time* (6921356). 1.25 *Dinosaurus* (30246714). 1.55 *Cartoon Mix* (2125266). 2.25 *Movies: Games and Videos* (82614153). 2.55 *Film: The Plank* (789379). 3.50 *Alfred* (691646). 5.10 *Goals Extra* (5131530). 4.50am *Johnnie* (78907641). 5.20-5.30am *Asian Eye* (1943660).

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As London except: 12.30pm *Movies, Games and Videos* (39207). 1.10 *Cartoon Time* (6921356). 1.25 *Dinosaurus* (30246714). 1.55 *Cartoon Mix* (2125266). 2.25 *Movies: Games and Videos* (82614153). 2.55 *Film: The Plank* (789379). 3.50 *Alfred* (691646). 5.10 *Goals Extra* (5131530). 4.50am *Johnnie* (78907641). 5.20-5.30am *Asian Eye* (1943660).

AREA 22
As London except: 12.30pm *Movies, Games and Videos* (39207). 1.10 *Cartoon Time* (6921356). 1.25 *Dinosaurus* (30246714). 1.55 *Cartoon Mix* (2125266). 2.25 *Movies*



JEREMY WARNER

Don't hold your breath over Guinness report

So finally, finally, after all these years, the Department of Trade and Industry is to publish its report on the Guinness affair. It might actually do so as early as next week, although the DTI was yesterday casting doubt on whether it could be ready quite so soon. The spark for this belated little act of public service is next Tuesday's ruling by the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg on whether Ernest Saunders, the former Guinness chairman, was unfairly tried over the Guinness shares fraud.

Whatever the judges have to say on the matter, the DTI takes the view that it is now free to publish the results of its 10-year investigation of how Guinness illegally won control of Distillers in the mid-1980s. Conspiracy theorists will believe the timing is dictated by the Government's desire to deflect attention from what is all too likely to be another slap in the face for British justice from the European courts. Europe might wish to say, or at least imply, that Mr Saunders and others didn't get a fair trial, but this report will claim in the strongest possible language that he is as guilty as sin. The Serious Fraud Office will fight tooth and nail to uphold the Guinness convictions, whatever the European court says.

I've followed the various twists and turns in the Guinness affair pretty closely over the years, but unfortunately I haven't yet been able to get my hands on a copy of the final

version of this report. However, from reasonably well informed gossip and an earlier unpublished draft it is possible to surmise roughly what's in it. Don't hold your breath.

Ten years after the event and with numerous criminal and civil trials to sift the evidence, there isn't a great deal the inspectors can say which is genuinely new about this affair. The Guinness scandal has passed into history and that's what the report is - a history book. There are no significant changes in the law, corporate governance or City practice the inspectors can recommend, for the lessons have been largely learnt and generally acted upon, in so far as they ever can be.

It is, of course, the case that the inspectors can still pass judgement on individuals and organisations still alive and kicking - and they will - but it isn't going to surprise anyone to learn that Mr Saunders is a crook or that Morgan Grenfell, his City advisers at the time, disregarded accepted rules and practices.

From what I hear about this report, however, the inspectors have missed an opportunity. In their analysis, evidence and judgement, they mirror very closely the prosecution case aired in the various criminal proceedings. Broadly, this attempts to pin blame for the scandal on a small group of key people and to varying degrees on the organisations they represented.

The central allegation is that led by Mr Saunders they conspired one with another illegally to support the Guinness share price and that this was kept secret not only from the markets (for the trick would not have worked if everyone had known the share price was being artificially supported), but also everybody else at Guinness and its professional advisers. Ergo these are the culpable ones and everyone else - lawyers, accountants, City advisers and the like - is in the clear. Indeed the case goes rather further than that, for to work properly - as it plainly did in the first Guinness trial - it needs you to believe that no one outside this inner core had any conception of what was going on. Moreover, they would have been profoundly shocked and tried to stop it had they known.

I've never believed this to be the full picture. It is largely true but the real story is more complicated - that the Guinness affair took place against a well established backdrop of cavalier practice and behaviour that encouraged the main protagonists into believing that if this was not quite the accepted way of doing things it was common enough at least to be tolerated. In some City firms practice of this sort was endemic, going unchecked either by internal controls or outside regulators.

I'm not saying here that any of the professionals caught up in the Guinness affair

knew what was going on or even that they should have been officiously running around the place saying there's something wrong here and we are going to find out about it. No one ever starts in these situations from the point of view that their client is a crook nor is it their job to act as watchdogs over the activities of others.

All the same, it seems astonishing that nobody suspected what was going on. At the very least they should have been more vigorous in their approach. In the cut and thrust of a contested takeover anything goes and it is reasonable to expect established practitioners in these matters to keep things in check. Even after DTI inspectors were sent into Guinness the attitude among some remained one of relaxed complacency right up to the moment when the full enormity of the scandal emerged. Then everyone ran for cover.

The Ernest Saunders version of events, that all these professionals knew what was going on and conspired to pin the whole saga on him, is absurd. But with so many highly paid, top-drawer names around the table to advise and guide him, it is hard to understand how this could have been allowed to happen, even now, ten years after the event. There won't be much of this in the DTI report, however. The possibility that the whole thing might have been avoided had a more vigorous and professional approach

been adopted is simply not addressed. This is a shame for it might have led to a more rounded and illuminating report. The inspectors were in a position to tackle the question of whether the night watchman was asleep on the job. They appear to have decided not to.

Nobody should be too surprised by the spectacle of Duncan Lewis flouncing out of his Granada TV job so soon after joining. Incompatibility seems to be his middle name. He did much the same thing when he was at Cable & Wireless's Mercury Communications subsidiary. He lasted barely more than a year there too. Gerry Robinson and Charles Allen are hard task masters, applying a vigorous regime of management control and accountability throughout the Granada empire. In never seemed very likely that they would be able to work happily with Mr Lewis.

He'll claim that he was never allowed the money or flexibility to do what he wanted with Granada's television interests. They'll claim he couldn't run a... That's what happens when you get a difference of approach in business. The real problem, I suspect, is that Mr Lewis wants to be his own boss. He wasn't, either at Mercury or Granada. Mr Lewis is the type of executive who needs to be running his own show.

Lopez stole GM secrets, court told

Imre Karacs
Bonn

The former head of purchasing at General Motors, Jose Ignacio Lopez de Arriortua, systematically stole trade secrets from the company as part of a premeditated act hatched several months before he jumped ship for Volkswagen. German prosecutors claimed yesterday.

The allegations came as Mr Lopez was formally indicted on charges of industrial espionage by the prosecutor's office in Darmstadt, near Frankfurt.

Charged alongside Mr Lopez were three other former GM executives who defected to VW with him three-and-a-half years ago - Jose Manuel Gutierrez, Jorge Alvarez and Rosario Pizarra.

However, the prosecutors said that their investigation had found no evidence that VW's chief executive, Ferdinand Piech, or anyone else from the German car maker was involved in the alleged espionage. Gerhard Andres, the chief public prosecutor, said more serious charges of fraud were not filed because no measurable amount of financial damage to GM could be determined.

But referring to Mr Lopez and the other indicted executives, he said: "The accused planned to acquire business

documents from the research, planning, production, and purchasing departments with a view toward their planned joint move to VW." This had been premeditated and planned months ahead.

Mr Lopez, head of purchasing for GM's European subsidiary Opel had revolutionised the car maker's relationship with suppliers, preparing the ground for cheaper production.

He was first approached by Mr Piech in November 1992. Following their meeting, Mr Lopez and three of his closest colleagues began rifling through GM's confidential documents, the prosecutors allege.

In March 1993 Mr Lopez informed GM that he was leaving, whereupon he was offered a promotion, which he gratefully accepted. A few days later, however, Mr Piech trumped the counter-offer, and Mr Lopez this time handed GM his final letter of resignation and took the first plane to Germany.

At VW headquarters in Wolfsburg, the GM defectors set themselves up in offices enveloped in a bubble of hi-tech security. Their mission was to develop the concept for an assembly plant codenamed "B" in the Spanish Basque country.

The factory would be the embodiment of all Lopez pri-



Eye of the storm: German prosecutors Thomas Seifert (left) and Gerhard Andres during their announcement in Darmstadt yesterday of a criminal indictment charging the former VW executive Jose Ignacio Lopez and three associates with conspiracy to steal trade secrets when they defected from General Motors in 1993. Photograph: Herbert Propper/AP

ciples combined: cars would be slotted together from "modules", rather than smaller components as before, and fitted on the assembly line largely by workers employed by outside contractors at cheaper rates.

Only one such factory existed elsewhere in the world, and even then only in blueprint form: the bush-bust "Plant X" designed by GM and also destined for northern Spain. Those are the very plans that Mr Lopez is said to have stolen.

In addition to these plans the Darmstadt prosecutors claim that the four accused also pilched suppliers' price lists, cost information on virtually the entire GM-Opel range in Eu-

rope, and documents outlining GM's cost-cutting strategy for 1992.

If convicted, Mr Lopez could face a five-year prison term, though as a first offender he would probably escape with a hefty fine.

Lawyers acting for Mr Lopez challenged the prosecutors' findings, saying they had mis-taken documents that GM had previously made public for company secrets and that many of their witnesses were not credible. Jurgen Tacke and Eberhard Wahl, representing Mr Lopez, said the charges would not stand up in court, and they would seek to have them dismissed.

Key dates in the Lopez affair

1989	Lopez joins GM Spain
1989	Lopez appointed Head of Purchasing at Opel
Nov 92	Lopez has first meeting with Ferdinand Piech, chairman of VW
Mar 93	Lopez joins VW as Head of Purchasing, then quits to become president of GM North America, which he then quits after a few days to rejoin VW
April 93	Opel starts legal action against Lopez for industrial espionage
8 Mar 96	GM files civil suit in America against VW for criminal conspiracy
13 May	VW sues GM for defamation
26 Nov	US judge in Detroit rules GM can pursue claim for damages
26 Nov	Lopez resigns from VW, but is rehired immediately as a consultant
13 Dec	Lopez and three other former executives formally indicted by German prosecutors

Halifax raises mortgage rate

Jim Treanor
Banking Correspondent

Halifax Building Society, the largest mortgage lender in the UK, finally raised its standard variable mortgage rate to 7.25 per cent yesterday, two weeks after its rivals acted on the quarter percentage point rise in base rates announced in October.

The move will allow the society to raise its savings rates in the new year when competition to new savers is expected to hot up when several leading building societies plan to convert to banks, unleashing a £17bn windfall for investors.

Alliance & Leicester was the first of the big societies to increase mortgage rates earlier this month. But Halifax decided to hold off until this week's monthly meeting between the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Governor of the Bank of England before instigating its first rate rise since February 1995.

The move comes amid growing evidence that the housing market is staging a recovery and shows the need to increase the rates on offer to savers, who have lost out in the race among building societies and banks to win mortgage business.

"We always have to balance

the interests of our borrowers and savers whilst continuing to remain competitive in the market. The recovery in the housing market continues and over the last two years borrowers have benefited from low interest rates and low mortgage payments," said Mike Blackburn, chief executive of Halifax.

The rate rise by Halifax allowed Nationwide, the largest remaining building society, to yesterday increase its standard variable mortgage rates by a quarter of a point to 6.99 per cent - which is still a quarter of a point below that offered by the large lenders.

Oxford Biomedica's debut flops

Magnus Grimond

Stock market jitters hammered another two new issues yesterday when Oxford Biomedica shares opened at less than half their placing price and it emerged that Fountain Forestry was cutting by 50 per cent the amount being raised from its own Alternative Investment Market flotation.

Oxford, a biotechnology group backed by Oxford University, saw its shares start dealing on AIM at just 42.5p yesterday morning, some 52 per cent below the 88p at which the shares were priced in October.

They ended slightly up at 47.5p.

Sentiment took a dive earlier this week when it was revealed that the two main underwriters, Stockton Trading, a Bahamian registered company, and Kaj Kjellquist, a private Swedish investor, had withdrawn their combined £5m commitment to underwrite the £6.15m then being raised. The move forced the company to delay first dealings until yesterday and reduce the amount being raised to £5m, which Oxford said was its minimum working capital requirement, although it had originally sought up to £11m.

Percy Lomax of sponsoring brokers Teather & Greenwood said the company was reserving its right to take legal action against the underwriters whose actions were the main cause of the "appalling" opening price.

The flop is the latest in a list of disappointing biotechnology flotations. Earlier this year, Cambrio abandoned plans to float, and Xenova has been forced to cut the amount being raised by £2.4m to £22.6m.

The news came as Fountain Forestry, which manages 80,000 hectares of forest and clears heaves from railway lines, said its placing would raise £2.25m, half the original target of £4.5m.

Foreign Exchange Rates

Country	Spot	1 month	3 months
US	1.652	1.652	1.652
Canada	2.508	2.508	2.508
Germany	2.561	2.561	2.561
France	6.661	6.661	6.661
Italy	2.537	2.537	2.537
Japan	187.7	187.7	187.7
ECU	1.296	1.296	1.296
Belgium	36.78	36.78	36.78
Denmark	9.963	9.963	9.963
Netherlands	2.203	2.203	2.203
Ireland	0.787	0.787	0.787
Norway	10.722	10.722	10.722
Spain	21.61	21.61	21.61
Sweden	1.232	1.232	1.232
Switzerland	2.178	2.178	2.178
Australia	2.005	2.005	2.005
Hong Kong	1.287	1.287	1.287
Malaysia	4.532	4.532	4.532
New Zealand	2.371	2.371	2.371
Saudi Arabia	5.282	5.282	5.282
Singapore	2.388	2.388	2.388

Other Spot Rates

Country	Spot	1 month	3 months
Argentina	1.652	1.652	1.652
Australia	1.652	1.652	1.652
Canada	1.652	1.652	1.652
China	1.652	1.652	1.652
Denmark	1.652	1.652	1.652
France	1.652	1.652	1.652
Germany	1.652	1.652	1.652
India	1.652	1.652	1.652
Japan	1.652	1.652	1.652
South Africa	1.652	1.652	1.652
Taiwan	1.652	1.652	1.652
UK	1.652	1.652	1.652

Interest Rates

UK	Base	1 month	3 months	6 months	1 year
Base	6.00%				
Discount	5.50%				
Overnight	5.50%				
1 month	5.50%				
3 months	5.50%				
6 months	5.50%				
1 year	5.50%				

Bond Yields

Country	Yield	Yield	Yield	Yield	Yield
UK	7.1%	7.1%	7.1%	7.1%	7.1%
US	6.1%	6.1%	6.1%	6.1%	6.1%
Germany	5.1%	5.1%	5.1%	5.1%	5.1%
France	4.1%	4.1%	4.1%	4.1%	4.1%
Italy	3.1%	3.1%	3.1%	3.1%	3.1%
Spain	2.1%	2.1%	2.1%	2.1%	2.1%
Japan	1.1%	1.1%	1.1%	1.1%	1.1%
Sweden	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%
Switzerland	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%
Netherlands	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%
Belgium	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%
Denmark	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%
Finland	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%
Ireland	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%
Portugal	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%
Greece	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%
Spain	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%
Italy	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%
France	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%
Germany	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%
UK	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%
US	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%
Canada	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%
Australia	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%
Japan	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%
South Africa	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%
Taiwan	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%
India	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%
China	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%
Malaysia	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%
Singapore	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%

Money Market Rates

Country	Rate	Rate	Rate	Rate	Rate
UK	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%
US	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%
Germany	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%
France	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%
Italy	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%
Spain	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%
Japan	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%
Sweden	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%
Switzerland	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%
Netherlands	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%
Belgium	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%
Denmark	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%
Finland	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%
Ireland	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%
Portugal	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%
Greece	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%
Spain	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%
Italy	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%
France	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%
Germany	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%
UK	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%
US	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%
Canada	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%
Australia	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%
Japan	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%
South Africa	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%
Taiwan	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%
India	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%
China	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%
Malaysia	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%
Singapore	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%

Tourist Rates

Discount Market Deals	5 1/4	5 1/4	5 1/4	5 1/4	5 1/4	5 1/4
Treasury Bills (Buy)	-	-	5 1/4	6 1/4	-	-
Dollar CDS	-	-	4 7/8	5 0/4	5 1/3	5 3/8
EDU Linked Dep	-	-	4 1/4	4 1/4	4 1/4	4 1/4

Tourist Rates

£ Buys	£ Buys	£ Buys	New Zealand (Dollars)
Australia (Dollars)	2070	France (Francs)	8.3275
Austria (Schillings)	17.370	Germany (Mark)	2.4700
Belgium (Francs)	50.8800	Greece (Drachmas)	393.0000
		Portugal (Escudos)	200.4800

Netanyahu's coming war

As Israelis and Palestinians bury their dead in the West Bank, **Robert Fisk** visits southern Lebanon where he finds evidence of a conflagration in the making

An explosion is coming in the Middle East, a detonation that may well change the region forever. We in the West have largely chosen not to heed the signs of impending calamity, preferring instead to pretend that the long-dead and deeply flawed "peace process" still has life in its decaying body, that the venal institutions of the Palestinian authority may yet control their society and create a democratic state or that the Israeli prime minister really means peace when he orders the seizure of more Arab land on the West Bank for Jewish homes.

But the Arab world is bracing itself for the shock wave of terrible events over the coming months as a right-wing Israel is confronted by the fury of those Arabs who believe they have been betrayed not only by Israel and by meaningless peace agreements but by the United States, which acted as guarantor of every treaty and every annex.

Just where the explosion will come may seem academic. Will it be in Ramallah, besieged by Israeli troops since the murder of a Jewish settler and her son in the occupied West Bank, claimed by a Palestinian group based in Damascus? Will it come in Hebron, from which Israel has failed to withdraw troops under the terms of its own signed agreement with the Palestinians? In Yasser Arafat's slum state of Gaza? Or will it come — and again, the possibility — in Lebanon? For if it does, Netanyahu is, as president Mubarak and Assad and King Hussein suspect, deliberately provoking the Arabs in order to destroy even the memory of the "peace process", then the answer may be found on a treeless, wind-swept hillside

called Jebel Basil. One of a series of low, stony escarpments in southern Lebanon, it forms part of the dividing line between Israel's occupation army in Lebanon and the United Nations zone to the north.

The terrain is important, because, on 9 November, the Israelis, while manning an artillery compound on top of a neighbouring hill, sent one of their American-made M-60 tanks – known in Israel as a ‘Magash’ – down a small road cut into the side of Jebel Basit. With their vehicle draped in armour, the tank crew had no reason to fear the journey. The pro-Iranian Hizbollah, which attacks Israel’s occupation troops daily, has been unable to damage Israeli tanks with their wire-guided, Russian-made Sagger missiles.

On this occasion, however, a Nepalese soldier serving with the UN saw a Hizbollah man preparing to fire a new kind of missile from behind a large bush on Jebel Basil. The rocket soared across the hillside, made contact with the tank and burned its way through the armour, exploding when it had penetrated the hull. One Israeli soldier was killed and two others seriously wounded.

Just 24 hours later, the Israelis sent another heavily armoured M-60 to drag the carcass of the destroyed tank away. Again, the Hizbollah were waiting and again they fired a missile which burned through inches of armour, detonating inside the tank, this time badly wounding the three man crew. Eyewitnesses were quick to recognise the new weapon as a Russian 113 "Konkurs" anti-tank guided missile - codenamed Spandrel by Nato - which uses a shaped charge Heat (high explosive anti-tank) warhead to burn through armour.

The Israelis were equally quick to react. They secretly withdrew all their M-60 tanks from southern Lebanon, replacing them with the better armoured Israeli-made Merkavas. With equal secrecy, they abandoned at night one of their strongest compounds above the Litani river at Alman, which is subject to daily missile attacks. Confidential orders were given to Israeli troops that the Hizbollah had so deeply infiltrated the ranks of Israel's own satrap militia, the "South Lebanon Army", that they were no longer to mount joint patrols with the militia men nor share artillery compounds with them.

Israel, in other words, is on the run in southern Lebanon. The roads are so prone to guerrilla attack that at least one Israeli position is now resupplied from the sea by Zodiac dinghies launched from gunboats. The commander of Israel's SLA militia, Antoine Lahd, has been sentenced to death in absentia by a Lebanese military court, while one of Israel's Lebanese collaborators, after being convicted of planting a bomb which killed the brother of a pro-Israeli Hizbollah sympathizer and two civilians, was put behind a firing squad in a Beirut prison. The only publicly stated response to this fiasco was the announcement by Israel that it had formed a supposedly elite military squad in its Lebanese occupation zone known as Egoz - the Hebrew word for wghlnt.

Far from being élite, Egöz was responsible for laying booby-trap bombs in the UN zone during last April's Israeli-Hizbollah war, a mine-setting exercise that was ambushed by Hizbollah from near the Qana

UN headquarters; Israel's response to that ambush was to fire back, slaughtering more than 100 civilians sheltering inside. "We know how to crack walnuts," Hizbollah radio replied. "They are hard on the outside but soft inside."

What has worried UN officers in Lebanon, however, has been the journalistic and political response to these largely uncovered events. First, the Israeli press and then American journalists began reporting, in remarkably similar language, a massive new "terrorist" threat in Lebanon. No sooner had the *Jerusalem Post* proclaimed the danger than the *Washington Post* was reporting from the Lebanese city of Baalbek that Bahairi, Saudi, Iranian, Kuwaiti, Kurdish, Sudanese, Egyptian and even British "terrorists" were training in Lebanese "terrorist" camps. The report quoted unnamed security "officials" — some of whom were presumably Israeli even if it did only admit that

"exactly who is being trained and for what missions are among the many mysteries..."

By 24 November, the *Boston Globe* was reporting "In Mideast, a renewal of terror", adding that "the Middle East seems to be slipping back into its old ways" - whatever that means. Another American paper speculated on the possibility of a Hizbollah missile attack on Haifa - Hizbollah have no missile capable of reaching that city - and of a Syrian decision (unsourced) to give greater support to terror groups'. By Tuesday this week, Israeli joint chief of staff General Matan Vilnai was saying that Israel will strike "very hard, if Syria went to war. Syria, if Syria, gives its encouragement to Hizbollah, allows weapons to pass through Damascus, and is in no mood to restrain the guerrilla group when the Israelis are publicly washing their hands of the "land for peace" deal brokered by

Washington that would have returned the Golan Heights to Syria in return for a peace treaty.

Lebanon fears that they understand all too well both the journalism and repeated threats of massive retaliation by Israel. "The Israelis are preparing the ground," a Western military officer said this week. "Maybe they won't strike, but they are preparing public opinion for large-scale military action in Lebanon — against Hizbollah, against the Syrians. They want the Syrians to realise who's boss — and they want the Syrians to come to the negotiating table without getting Golan back. Where are all these 'terrorists'?" What is this nonsense about Basque ETA guerrillas? This is the same rubbish the Israelis had the press writing before they invaded in 1982, only then it was Palestinian "terror camps."

So convinced were the

Americans by these reports — most of them inspired, or caused, by *Ha'aretz* — that they sent a military delegation to Lebanon. Asiv to find out if there really was a military threat from mass "terrorism" or from the Syrian army. They discussed and decided on an impossible source. The Israeli reports were mostly based on an outdated Israeli army logistics department document. In Beirut, US embassy officials summoned UN personnel in the hope of learning whether Hizbollah was really threatening a mass "terrorism" attack. American intelligence operatives concluded that the reports were rubbish, and that Israel's prime concern — far from being "terrorism" — was that Hizbollah guerrillas were effectively making life impossible for Israel's occupation force in southern Lebanon.

The fact that this occupation *only continues because Israel wishes to have a strong hand in any future Israeli-Lebanese peace talks* has long been

The Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu weeps at the funeral of the two settlers murdered near Ramallah this week. Photograph: Reuters

acknowledged by the UN and more privately, by the United States. The occupation zone (10 per cent of Lebanon) was not to protect Israel, a fact amply demonstrated in April when, in response to a booty-trap bomb that killed a Lebanese boy — the work of Egoz, they suspect — Hizbollah fired hundreds of Katyushas across the border. Since April, 24 Lebanese civilians have been wounded by Israeli gunfire — in the same period, no Israeli civilians have been hurt by Hizbollah. Israel has lost 18 occupation soldiers since April; Hizbollah lost 2 guerrillas — in other words, low-intensity war, but nothing to justify the bellicose words that Lebanese have been listening to.

Yet fears are growing in Lebanon, not least because Washington is freed from presidential elections, appears to be as supine as ever in the face of Israel's every wish. When Netanyahu announced further Jewish settlement in east Jerusalem – an act that effectively destroyed any hope of final stage talks in the "peace process" – the State Department did not even condemn the decision, calling it instead a "complicating factor".

An assault on Lebanon is not likely to elicit any more courageous comment from Washington. The appointment of the faithfully pro-Israel Madeleine Albright as Secretary of State produced only one comment from Lebanon's president, Elias Hrawi. "God protect us," he said.

Across the Arab world, they are saying much the same. Presidents and kings are all warning the West of the coming conflagration. Moubarak is said by those closest to him to be in a state of deep despair. King Hussein is even reported to have considered breaking off all ties with Israel. President Assad still politely urging the Americans to intervene, has no illusions. "Will the Israelis continue to defy the will of the whole world while the international community does nothing?" one Syrian paper asked this week. They probably will. And it may well be Lebanon, as usual, that pays the first price.



jo brand's week

Tuesday found me in Selfridges, having agreed to work there for two hours on behalf of the Terrence Higgins Trust. Selfridges was donating 10 per cent of takings for the evening. I have to say that these things are an ordeal. One has to give oneself to be an exhibit and to be moved around as required. The usual gaggle of charming photographers had their imaginations working overtime in Santa's grotto as they suggested I drape myself seductively over Santa, who looked as unhappy about the idea as I did. The experience was eased to a great extent by the staff, who whisked me round and let me have the odd sneaky fag behind various displays (Thank you Tony, Paul, Penny and Mark). Other people off the telly were doing similar things ("Go on Joe, give 'im a kiss," as I passed Richard Wilson). But there's no doubt that doing some good does do you good. Everyone in Selfridges was in such a good mood that I can't imagine why they don't do it every day. Well, perhaps I can.

Sitting in a queue of traffic on the A40 out of London to Oxford is something I do

quite a lot. At the traffic lights, various blokes ply their wares to disgruntled travellers sitting nose to tail. The other day my reverie was interrupted by someone shouting at me, "Oh, Jo!" I turned to see a lorry driver. "Oh Gawd, here we go," I thought – and then realised he was proffering a bunch of roses. With a cheery "Happy Christmas," he passed them to me. What a surprise, because I wasn't even wearing Impulse.

As the Mirror metamorphoses into *The Sun*, with just the lack of a pair of exposed ovaries to choose between, it is depressing to realise that the vast majority of people in this country who purchase newspapers – and I use that term loosely – are being challenged intellectually only up to the age of nine. This presumably must be why women are concerned only about Tony Blair's barnet. Why men give a toss about who's got the best supermarket's opinions on life are valued. The tabloids are a depressing indictment of contemporary British life ... Oh yeah, and they slag me off all the time too.

A company from America has taken over its first British prison, heralding, one would imagine, a bit of a rush by the Americans to sort out our criminal population, as if they hadn't got enough to do back home. Still, it's not really about that is it, silly me. It's about the profits on the backs of a section of the population many of whom started life without a hope. Not having a hope in England does not put you in a slightly better position than not having a hope in America, where the size of the prison population is a testament to the desperation of people who have nothing in the richest country in the world. It's an American ethos which is all but ingrained in this country anyway will ensure that the charmingly named

Corrections Corporation of America will be able to drum up plenty of new business, I'm sure.

All those fitness-obsessed people who have tried to force relentless sporting activity down the throats of the rest of us must be very saddened this week to discover that research has shown that young types who take part in non-team sports such as aerobics and tennis are far more likely to become delinquents than those who don't. I have to confess having only been to aerobics once in my life, some 10 or so years ago, and it was the most hideous nightmare I have ever indulged in which seemed to me reminiscent of the atmosphere of those Hitler Youth mass exercises.

At one point we had to do arm exercises to the extended version of "Free Nelson Mandela," and I found myself thinking after some minutes, "I wish they bloody would," if only to release us all from this torment. I never went back and I can say, with my poor limp hand on my heart, that *since then I've not even indulged in the teeniest bit of shoplifting.*

The ego of some people is breathtaking sometimes. I got a little snippet of news this week about a Kaiser businessman who has recently paid \$26,000 to have a personalised number plate bearing his name, "Niger". I cannot understand why you would want to drive round and demonstrate to the rest of the traffic on the road that you are prepared to spend a large fortune on attaching your own "I'm a bit of a big head" name to your vehicle. Spending that amount of money on a minor ego massage, when it could have gone to a million better places, seems obscene to me. I'd like to creep up his drive one night and replace it with a new number plate bearing the legend "Knobhead", for

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They have sold
millions in
Japan, where
'Wannabe'
probably
means 'I love
squirrels'

david
aaronovitch



Pop stars don't win elections. Billy Bragg failed to secure the youth vote for Kinnock and David Bowie's contribution to the triumph of Mrs Thatcher has not been thought worthy of a published thesis by Professor Anthony King of Essex University. Nor will the interview with the Spice Girls – as featured in this week's *Spectator* – do very much to save John Major. As was admitted recently by a Labour PR man, celebrity endorsement is important only in the sense that "you look sad if you don't have any."

For those unfamiliar with the pop scene, the Spice Girls are the latest in a long line of tame early teen idols, inheritors of the mantle of the Bay City Rollers, Bros and Take That. Their unique selling proposition is that they are feisty, in-your-face females. They have, of course, sold millions in Japan, where "Wannabe" (their latest hit) probably means "I love squirrels."

They are also brilliantly marketed as collectables. Each one has a different name and gimmick (Sporty, Scary, Ginger, Hot and Baby Spice). It can only be a matter of time before the manufacturers of Barbie or Sindy release all five at £13.99 a shot and parents find themselves purchasing the set. Hardly will they have done this than the Spice Girls will split up and be replaced by John Thaw and Kevin Whately singing cover versions of Elvis Presley.

So bloody what? Given all the above, what does it matter that these young women should embrace the cause of low taxation, the House of Lords, the monarchy, Europhobia and free love (a combination that, curiously, suggests an image of Mrs T romping topless on a Californian beach)? And it is hardly surprising that the *Spectator*, in its current right-wing anarchic incarnation, should so approve of young women whose approach to life is materialistic, uncluttered by youthful principle and hedonistic. That is no reason for the rest of us to lose sleep.

Nor is their ignorance in any way unique. When Geri (Ginger Spice) argues against European integration on the basis that "Britain was the first to break away from the Roman Empire" (Yippee, here come the Dark Ages!), at least she knows that the islands were

once under the sway of Rome. I wouldn't swear that Kiki Dee knows as much. When Geri goes on to assert that "we travel through Europe and all those countries look the same. Only England looks different," we can afford to smile, knowing that a quick visit to Siena followed by a trip to Heligoland ought to sort that one out. The simultaneous belief in the hereditary principle ("earls and dukes are good for tourism") and pure meritocracy suggests an unformed quality in the Girls' thinking.

And yet I hate this interview and I hate them for giving it and I hate their interviewer – Simon Sebag Montefiore – for enjoying it so much. The one line which sums it up for me is this: "Labour does things for everyone, which might create laziness." This is the pure doctrine of welfare dependency, which I am prepared to accept from those who believe in decent state-funded education, a minimum wage and assistance to return to work (ie those who have an alternative to dependency other than immiseration), but not from those whose sole criticism of Blair is that they do not like his tax policies.

Well, draws my pal from the left, what's the deal? They have absorbed the orthodox drive of the pure market much as you and I (a large hand drops sympathetically on my shoulder) absorbed all that Fabian drive about redistribution and demand-led economics. Chill out.

Ah yes, I think, but our drive was better than their drive. Our drive was about the need to improve life for people, about moral responsibility, about no man being an island. It was only as we got older that we discovered that it was difficult to do. But their drive means that they don't want to do it at all, even if it was easy! They don't start idealistic and become realistic; they start cynical and will become monstrous.

Up pops another friend. The polls tell us (should we care to listen) that among no section of the population is Labour's lead as great as among 18-24-year-old women. The Spice Girls are out of tune. Maybe. But there's something in this Tamara Beckwith, have-it-all, tolerant but apathetic, supremely individualistic culture which suggests that (as Cynid Lauper didn't sing) girls just wanna be shits.

Everyone's whistling Dixie these days

by Godfrey Hodgson

"Hold on to your Confederate money, boys, the South will rise again!" But the way old southern jokes are not altogether a joke any longer. More than 150 years after Robert E Lee's surrender at Appomattox court house, with a man from Arkansas starting his second term in the White House, it looks as if the South won the Civil War after all.

A third of a century ago, when the civil rights movement was transforming the society of the southern states, everyone assumed that the South was a backward, vestigial region. As a young reporter, I interviewed Martin Luther King and other leaders of the peaceful revolution. In places such as Oxford, Mississippi, and Selma, Alabama, I witnessed the ferocious violence with which an angry minority of southern whites resisted change. I watched as George Wallace and other southern leaders shouted, "The South says never!"

At the time, everybody – northern whites, southern blacks and even most southern whites, as well as foreign journalists like me – took it for granted that the South would have to become more like the rest of the country. In some ways, of course, it did. Legal segregation died. Within years, prosperous blacks were sitting down to lunch and dining in swimming pools with whites. Strict taboos disappeared, unlearned, overnight.

The South got richer. In 1940, President Roosevelt set up a national commission to investigate what he called "the nation's number one economic problem" – the South. Economically, the Deep South was then an underdeveloped country inside the body of the most developed country on earth. Standards of housing, transport, health and, above all, education were the lowest in the country for whites, never mind blacks.

By the late 1960s, the South was becoming the Sunbelt. Gleaming towers rose in the business districts of southern cities. The sprawling suburbs of these and other southern cities, with their handsome houses at low prices, their sunshine and their golf courses, offered a standard of living for executives that was the envy of counterparts in New York or Chicago.

In the 1940s, the 11 states of the Confederacy had about a quarter of the people of the US. Now they account for a rough third of the national population, and more if you count the southern migrants who thronged to California.

In other ways, however, something quite unexpected has happened. The rest of the US has become more like the South.

The southernisation of American culture is pervasive. Nashville, not New York's Tin



Something quite unexpected has happened – the rest of the United States has become more like the South

Pan Alley, is now the capital of the music business. Country music, once the whining music of the southern white working class, is everybody's music now.

Professional sports, especially golf, baseball, football and basketball, which through television have a huge influence on popular culture, are largely dominated by southerners, including southern-born blacks such as Michael Jordan, the ultimate basketball superstar.

Southern religion is triumphant. The once-mainstream Protestant denominations – Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Methodists – are all losing membership. Southern evangelicals, including the once-despised Pentecostals, are on the rise, and the Southern Baptist Convention, originally the whites-only church of the defeated South, is growing fast in numbers and power. The religious right is southern in origins and largely run by southerners such as Pat Robertson and Ralph Reed.

Politically, the domination of the South is both visible and profound. The President comes from Arkansas, the Vice-president from Tennessee. The Speaker of the House, Newt Gingrich, comes from Georgia, and most of his most prominent lieutenants are southerners, too. When the job of majority leader of the Senate fell vacant a few months ago, the two candidates for the powerful job were the two senators from Mississippi – Trent Lott (who won) and Thad Cochran.

Twenty-five years ago, Mississippi accents sounded like a broken banjo string in political Washington. Now the President of the United States likes to sneak out of the White House to eat catfish and collard greens in what would once have been a contradiction in terms – a smart southern restaurant, called Sweet Georgia Brown.

The grip of the South over national politics goes back, paradoxically, to the civil rights revolution. Before the 1960s, the South was a one-party region. The great majority of

white southerners could never forgive the party of Abraham Lincoln for winning the war, freeing the slaves and billeting the Union army in their home towns. So they were "yellow dog" Democrats – they'd vote for a yellow dog, so long as he was a Democrat.

Now, from the 1960s on, all that has changed. It was the northern Democrats and "the Kennedys" who had violated the southern way of life. (People forgot that President Johnson, who did most for black rights, was a southerner himself). Black southerners began to vote, and they voted Democrat. The middle classes from the azalea-clad suburbs began to vote Republican. Now, 30 years on, the reversal is almost complete. Most white southern males vote Republican and call themselves conservatives.

The switch has had a dramatic effect on national politics. Until the 1960s, Congress was controlled in theory by a Democratic majority but in

reality by a conservative alliance between Republicans and southern Democrats. Now conservative southerners dominate the Republican majority, while to dispel the dangerous impression that they are the party of blacks, minorities and women, the national Democrats have had to move to the Right, picking southern leaders such as Jimmy Carter, Bill Clinton and (probably next) Al Gore to lead them.

The consequences of the southern hegemony are immense, both for America and for the world. The *New York Times's* correspondent in Atlanta, Peter Applebome, points out in a new book, *Dixie*

that the South is now the most highly qualified, some of them are going home. And I think I can understand why.

Southern culture may be provincial, but – properly packaged – it has its universal appeal, as Coca Cola and country music, southern fried chicken and cowboy fashions have all proved. As writers and story-tellers, preachers and politicians, southerners have a way with words.

Above all, they have the advantage over their fellow Americans that they have experienced both defeat and guilt. They know what it is to fight bravely and still lose. And they know what it is to be wrong. Now the New South is trying to show the way to win in the long run is not to say "Never!" but to change.

Taking the best out of bestseller

The chair of the Booker panel, Carmen Calli, is telling me her books of the year but I cannot understand a word. When in doubt, bluff, and so I ask for a book's name to be repeated. She bursts out laughing – it's an author. He was on the Booker shortlist! Rohinton Mistry.

Oh, that Rohinton Mistry. I not only blushed but flushed so red that I feared the fire alarm would go off. Nor am I the only one in this predicament; reading the seasonal best-books-of-the-year lists is always a humbling experience, and the odd flash of guilty ignorance is only to be expected. After all, many of these authors are not bookshop names, much less household names. Why is it that the great, the good and the glamorous never seem to pick a bestseller? Perhaps it is time to share the blushes.

This year, readers of *The Sunday Times*, *Telegraph* and *Independent on Sunday* were treated to 200 odd titles put forward by some 60 literary Just one of them is among those mentioned by Bookwatch director Peter Harland as being in this year's top sellers. Harland's list does not mention Jilly Cooper's *Appassionata*, Jeffrey Archer's *The Fourth Deadly Sin*, or Grisham's *Runaway Jury*. In Grisham's *Runaway Jury*, there is *Sophie's World*, *Behind the Scenes at the Museum*, *The Horse Whisperer*, Stephen King's *Green Mile* series and John Grisham's *The Rain-*



Haven't read
anything on
the literary's
best-book
lists? Don't
worry –
neither have
they. Ann
Treneman
examines
the bluffs
and blushes

maker. In non-fiction, look for Jack Charlton's *Autobiography* and something called *True Animal Tales* by Rodd Harris. Della may outsell them all, and don't forget to add on something to do with the X-Files to most of those lists. That could end up as series of the year, says Mr Harland.

So why have the literary taken the best out of bestseller? "Many pick books that they are pretty confident no one else has read, including themselves," says Jeffrey Archer, secure in the knowledge he had chosen a Le Carré. "Also, it's quite common for critics to support each other." Sure enough, the lists have a mesmerising roundabout quality in terms of names and name-dropping.

Archer is not a name on that roundabout and that must rank a bit. "Someone is reading, because I'm selling more than ever. For my part, I do choose the books that I like," he says. "Some I choose are so-called low-brow, popular fiction and I'm not at all embarrassed to do so." But what are we to make of his other choice? *The Dictionary of Art* runs to 34 volumes and costs £4,900. Archer is clearly baffled with it – "For art buffs like myself, if you can't get John Julius Norwich to come and live with you, this is the next best thing." But low brow it isn't.

Jilly Cooper seems to have suddenly been struck by an attack of the interesting. Her books of the year are a diary of

a Hollywood gofer and an opera history primer. She's lucky that those proving the aisles of one of Britain's busiest bookstores do not take their book choices quite so seriously.

Some five million people are served each year by various John Menzies outlets in the south terminal at Gatwick Airport, and Darrell Blake is the man in charge of making sure they find something to buy. He reads

popular novels now as opposed to literature," he says. "My book of the year would probably be Ken Follet's *Night Over Water*. It's a very nice piece of work."

He's also been at Cambridge getting a doctorate in Chinese politics, and his holiday reading is a Tom Clancy techno-thriller. He also mentions Proust.

Michèle Roberts is a poet and novelist who has appeared on two "best of" lists. "It's

important to be as honest as you can and not to give books written by best friends," she says. "The problem is having to choose only a few." I press her for a popular choice: "I read thrillers for fun. The latest Michael Dibden was very good."

Georgina Sims might agree. She is found at Menzies in possession of a Ruth Rendell and admits to a passion for mystery.

Critics' choice

Last Orders
Graham Swift
Reading in the Dark
Seamus Deane
Alias Grace
Margaret Atwood
Every Man for Himself
Beryl Bainbridge
The Spirit Level
Seamus Heaney

People's choice

Sophie's World
Jostein Gaarder
Behind the Scenes at the Museum
Kate Atkinson
The Horse Whisperer
Nick Evans
Green Mile series
Stephen King
The Rainmaker
John Grisham

LEFT TO DIE

"Cristina is six but has the body of a baby. Other little girls have the wrinkled faces of old women. Their matchstick limbs are covered in open sores."



Tanya Barron on visiting Hinceni Orphanage

Help End The Suffering of Moldova's Forgotten Orphanage Children

At Hinceni Orphanage filthy, starving children lie in rows waiting to die. Nearly 25% did last winter. Around 10,000 children are in institutions.

They eat slops and sleep under threadbare blankets. They have no hot water, no heating, no medicine and up to now no hope.

The European Children's Trust, sister charity of The Romanian Orphanage Trust, is working flat-out to get help through to the orphanages, starting with Hinceni.

Your gift today will save lives and bring hope

- £25 could buy emergency food supplements for two children to stop them dying from starvation.
- £50 could buy a medicine box containing antiseptic, antibiotics, vitamins, pain killers and life-saving drugs to help treat five children.
- £250 could buy heaters, blankets, food supplements, soap and a medical pack to help save eight children.

Call 01273 299333 or cut the coupon now

☐ I will give £ (Cheque to The European Children's Trust) to save the lives of orphanage children in Moldova.

£250 becomes £310 through the Government's Gift Aid Scheme, meaning we can help more children at no extra cost to you.

Mr/Ms/Ms

Address

Postcode

Tel No

I will give by Access/Visa/CAF Card

Signature

Date

Return to Tanya Barron, MOLDOVA APPEAL 608,

The European Children's Trust, FREEPOST,

21 Garlick Hill, London EC4B 2AR.

Registered Charity No 104827



Please act now – winter is coming

business & city

Business news desk: tel 0171-293 2636 fax 0171-293 2098
BUSINESS & CITY EDITOR: JEREMY WARNER

Lewis makes abrupt exit from Granada

Matthew Horsman
Media Editor

Duncan Lewis, the chief executive of Granada Media Group, has left the company with immediate effect, following simmering and at times dramatic disagreements with group chief executive Charles Allen and Gerry Robinson, the chairman.

His departure immediately led to speculation that he would join Cable & Wireless Communications, the new cable television and telephony group which includes Mercury, Mr Lewis's former company. C&W is actively seeking a chief executive for the group.

Neither Mr Lewis nor Granada, the hotels-to-television conglomerate, would comment in detail on his departure. In a curt statement, Granada said: "Both Duncan and Granada Group management have recognised an incompatibility of approaches and have therefore agreed to part on an amicable basis."

It is understood, however, that Mr Lewis felt the main group management, headed by Mr Robinson and Mr Allen, were not committed enough to the media side of the business, and that there had been disagreements about acquisition strategy.

Mr Lewis left the Granada headquarters on Wednesday, following a meeting with Mr Allen. He has not returned since. He had been on a rolling one-year contract of £250,000 a year, which is expected to be bought out.

A spokesman for Granada said that Mr Lewis's appointment had been "a brave experiment" that had gone wrong. Added a company insider: "He didn't know anything about television, and it showed."

Granada denied there had been any basic disagreement over strategy. "In a company such as this, there has to be good relations between group and the chief executives of the divisions," the spokesman said. "For some time, it was clear things were not going well."

Added a senior broadcasting executive within the group: "television requires creativity, and the ability to get along with creative people."

It is understood that Granada's senior executives were also concerned about Mr Lewis's management style, which some have styled too "showy". As well, he is believed to have spent as much as £500,000 on developing strategy papers for the media group, an amount that was viewed at head office as excessive.

There were suggestions last night that Mr Lewis had wanted to invest aggressively, and had looked at joint venture production in the US. City-TV stations in Britain and other operations in continental Europe. To date, most of Granada's TV investments have been confined to the ITV sector.



'Insufficiently committed to media': Charles Allen

Some of his past colleagues have said Mr Lewis was "mercurial" and lacked focus. At Granada, his short tenure was marked by several rows with Mr Robinson and Mr Allen, who used to run the television business before rising to chief executive.

Mr Allen, the dour Scot who acts as the details man to Gerry Robinson's more flamboyant strategists, was understood to have been particularly uncomfortable with Mr Lewis. Granada declined to comment on suggestions that the two had a furious row on the day Mr Lewis left the building.

Mr Lewis, 45, moved from BT to Cable & Wireless, where he rose to become chief executive of Mercury, a job he held for only nine months. His departure was said to have followed disagreements with management.

He had been a surprise choice for the job at Granada, where he oversaw the company's television interests. Granada owns the Granada and London Weekend Television franchises, 27 per cent of Yorkshire-Tyne Tees, and 60 per cent of Granada Sky Broadcasting, a joint satellite TV joint venture with Rupert Murdoch's BSkyB.

Mr Lewis's replacement is Steve Morrison, a long-serving Granada executive, who became managing director of Granada Media Group earlier this year when the operations were restructured.

"Morrison is a far more logical choice for a company like Granada," a media analyst said. At the time of his appointment, Mr Lewis said he would bring his knowledge of telecommunications to the media business, in recognition of greater convergence in the sector between "content" and "carriage".



Heading for pastures new: The industry is betting that Duncan Lewis could be planning a job with Cable & Wireless Communications which is looking for a chief executive.

Lang gives Northern green light

Chris Godsmark
Business Correspondent

Tan Lang, President of the Board of Trade, yesterday gave a green light to a final wave of takeover bids for the few remaining independent regional electricity companies, by deciding not to refer to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission the £782m hostile bid by US-owned CE Electric for Northern Electric.

The decision wrong-footed several City analysts who had predicted an MMC investigation and sent shares in all five remaining independent RECs soaring. Northern's share price jumped by almost 7 per cent, from 602.5p to 642p, just short of CE Electric's raised 650p all-cash offer.

Shares in the three remaining independent RECs which are not subject to takeover bids also surged ahead, with London Electricity rising 28p to 679.5p, Southern Electric adding 27p to 774.5p and Yorkshire Electricity jumping by 13.5p to 756p.

The decision also makes government approval of the agreed £1.3bn takeover bid by US utility Dominion Resources for East Midlands Electricity almost certain. Sources said it would be inconceivable that Mr Lang would refer the Dominion bid to the MMC after having given the go-ahead for the bid for Northern. East Midlands's shares were up 30p to 656.5p, compared with Dominion's cash offer of 670p.

Some leading City investors had also expected an MMC referral on the basis of recent surprise decisions by Mr Lang, including his ruling blocking bids for South West Water by rival water companies.

There was speculation last night that other US utilities would make bids for RECs early in the new year, with the industry facing a complete carve-up before the general election. One analyst suggested Entergy, the New Orleans utility, could renew exploratory discussions with London Electricity.

Yorkshire Electricity last night denied it had received any bid approaches. A spokesman said: "We are not in any talks with anybody. We've been asked the same question for the past 18 months and there's always been the same answer."

Mr Lang's announcement said the DTI had been given specific assurances by CE Electric that it would maintain Northern's "financial and management resources", reflecting concerns expressed by Professor Stephen Littlechild, the industry regulator. CalEnergy.

the US power generator which is CE Electric's biggest shareholder, has debts of around \$2bn (£1.2bn) and has been frequently quizzed about its debt rating.

Northern's chances of finding off the bid were helped yesterday as another leading City investor came out in support of the company's existing management, led by chairman David Morris. Foreign & Colonial which holds 1.5 per cent of Northern shares, gave the board its backing. David Manning, F&C director, explained: "We believe that the current bid for Northern falls well short of a fair value for the company. Northern has delivered on all its promises to date and we feel we should support them in rejecting the final offer."

The Prudential, Northern's biggest shareholder, also pledged to continue supporting the existing management, having raised its stake in the company slightly this week to 11.35 per cent. A spokesman explained: "Our decision was based on our perception of value in the company and this was clearly unaffected by the announcement."

Northern also claimed that another big, but unnamed investor with more than 2 per cent of the company was throwing its weight behind management. David Sokol, chief executive of CalEnergy, is thought to be meeting the Prudential on Monday in a final lobbying campaign before the Friday 20 December deadline. Mr Sokol insisted his offer remained fair, despite the rise in Northern's share price: "If our offer fails then Northern's shares will head back to the 494p price before we launched the bid."

One obstacle could be Northern's vocal band of small shareholders which controls a total of some 21 per cent of the company.

Chris Foote Wood from the Northern Small Shareholders Association said he would fight to the bitter end to keep Northern independent.

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Rolls 'confident' of disposing of Parsons plant

Chris Godsmark

Rolls-Royce yesterday insisted it remained confident of selling its Parsons steam turbine business despite announcing up to 800 redundancies at the plant. In what the company described as a "precautionary statement", it said around 400 jobs would go in late January or early February as work at the factory on North Tyneside dries up. A further 400 staff could be laid off if negotiations with companies interested in buying all or part of the operation are not swiftly concluded.

Unions said Parsons' 1,500 remaining employees were shocked by the news, which had come after the management had been giving the workforce more optimistic signals about the continuing discussions with outside bidders.

Barney McGill, the works representative for the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions, said: "The workers here were stunned by the announcement. In the run-up to Christmas this is a severe blow for those involved and the scale of the redundancies were definitely unexpected. However, we've come a long way since the original announcement by Rolls-Royce back in July and we are probably more

optimistic that the company can be sold than a few weeks ago."

Rolls had given all the staff protective redundancy notices early last month to comply with employment law which stipulates that workers must be given 90 days' notice before losing their jobs.

Since the decision to sell or close Parsons the plant has not been bidding for new orders. One reason for the job cuts is that work has been coming to a close on one of the last big contracts, to make turbines for a 110 megawatt gas-fired power station under construction in Godavari in India.

It also emerged that a much bigger Indian contract, to build a huge coal-fired station at Balaghar, had fallen through. Rolls said it had withdrawn from bidding for the work after deciding to leave the heavy power generation business.

Last night the company insisted it remained "fairly confident" that it could sell Parsons. Rolls-Royce has made provisions of £250m for the possible closure of the business, along with a boiler plant at Rolls-Royce International Combustion in Derby which employs 900. But experts have cast doubt on the chances of selling Parsons in an industry which has huge overcapacity.

£1m payout for Wickes directors

Patrick Toohar

The new chief executive and finance director of Wickes, the do-it-yourself retailer whose former bosses are being investigated for fraud, have been awarded salary and options package valued at more than £1m each.

Wickes has also spent more than £10m in fees to professional advisers in the last six months since discovering past profits linked to supplier rebates had been overstated by £51m.

The details are contained in a document sent yesterday to Wickes' shareholders urging them to accept a deeply discounted £53.2m rescue rights issue or risk the crisis-hit company going into receivership.

Of particular interest are provisions for "golden parachute" payments if Wickes loses its independence. Analysts say Wickes has been so weakened by the discovery of the serious accounting irregularities that it is a sitting duck for a £200m takeover.

Bill Grimsey, who was appointed chief executive last month, stands to earn a bonus of £230,000 if Wickes is taken over by August 1997 or his employment is terminated within a year of such an event. Bill Hoskins, Wickes' finance director, will get £200,000 under a similar arrangement.

The document also shows that Mr Grimsey received a special payment of £115,000 "in recognition of the exceptional services he has provided to the group since July 1996". Mr Hoskins got £100,000 for his recent efforts.

Mr Grimsey is on a one-year rolling contract paying £230,000 a year and has share options valued at £50,000, while Mr Hoskins is also entitled to share options worth three times his annual salary of £190,000.

The exercise price of both sets of options is performance-related, but it could be set at the shares' closing price on the day before a bid is made for Wickes.

Trading in Wickes' shares was suspended at 6p in June after the accounting scam came to light, forcing the resignation of £1m-a-year chairman Henry Sweetbaum. Seven other directors have since left.

Dealings in the company's shares will resume on 7 January if shareholders approve a one-for-one rights issue, which has been fully underwritten by SBC Warburg, at the equivalent of 15p a share, a £100m capital

reduction and new banking facilities of £52m.

Wickes said the rights issue will cost it £3.5m in expenses, including a standard underwriting commission of 2 per cent equal to £1.35m.

It has also paid £6.6m in fees to lawyers, accountants and auditors. Some £5m will be split between City law firm Linklaters & Paines and accountancy firm Price Waterhouse, who led an internal inquiry into Wickes' accounts.

Last month the Metropolitan Police and Serious Fraud Office began a formal investigation into unnamed former Wickes' directors. Wickes does not expect the inquiry to result in any liability for the group.

Wickes said the total pay bill for directors in the year to December 1995 was £3.85m.

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Triplex Lloyd castigates Cook's salary

Patrick Toohar

Triplex Lloyd, the Midlands-based engineering bidding £58m for steel castings group William Cook, yesterday launched a withering personal attack on Andrew Cook, its controversial chairman and chief executive.

In a letter to Cook's shareholders, Triplex seized on Mr Cook's five-year rolling contract, which has seen him earn more than £500,000, or up to 11 per cent of William Cook's profits, in each of the last four years.

"Andrew Cook's remuneration package has performed much better than your company's share price," said Graham Lockyer, Triplex's chief executive. "Poor corporate governance at William Cook is so extreme that it is not an esoteric debate. It is a monetary issue which has had, and without Triplex Lloyd's offer will continue to have, an adverse impact on shareholder value."

Triplex highlighted Mr Cook's service contract, which entitles him to a Bentley Turbo

and a Land Rover Discovery, both of which can be replaced every two years by a new car of the same model.

Mr Cook is also the only director employed by William Cook and is entitled to retire on a full pension at the age of 55. William Cook has no finance director on its board. The other four directors are all engaged as self-employed consultants.

Mr Lockyer pointed out that of the two non-executive directors, one is 71 and the other, aged 83, has sat on Cook's

board for 41 years. Mr Cook, who recently described his £1.5m "golden parachute" as a "pittance", has promised to sharpen up his corporate governance act by announcing plans to split the role of chairman and chief executive and to appoint at least one new non-executive director if the Triplex Lloyd bid lapses.

William Cook is expected next week to quantify its forecast of a "substantial improvement" in profits for the year to March 1997.

Banks Target cheaper euro payment system

Peter Rodgers
Financial Editor

A group of international banks announced plans yesterday for a payments system in the new euros that will provide a cut-price alternative to the controversial Target clearing system.

Target has been at the centre of a blazing row during the preparations for monetary union, because France and Germany want the system to discriminate against banks from countries that stay out of the single currency.

Eddie George, Governor of the Bank of England, has been campaigning for better treatment for British banks that use Target if the UK does stay out of EMU. But he made clear in September that if the obstacles to using Target to process payments between banks are too great there will be alternatives available.

The ECU Banking Association, which represents 49 of the world's largest banks including Deutsche Bank and Union Bank of Switzerland, said it had decided at a meeting in Luxembourg, chaired by Ashley Dowson of Barclays Bank, to proceed with what it called a "truly European cross-border payment system for EMU".

The cost will be less than one euro per payment compared with five to seven euros which the EBA claimed would be the cost for Target. A report prepared for the Luxembourg meeting said the EBA system should be capable of reaching a market share of 30 per cent, half as much again as Target.

A third system in which banks would use correspondent banks in other countries to process their payments was expected to reach a similar market share to Target of 20 per cent.

The EBA claimed its new system, which will be developed from an existing computerised clearing system for euros, would be complementary to Target. It could become the main payment system for cross-border commercial and financial payments in Euros, while Target was designed for monetary policy transactions and very high value or urgent wholesale payments.

The difference between the two systems, and the main reason the EBA's is cheaper, is that Target settles transactions instantly, eliminating the risk that a failure of one bank could have a knock-on effect on others.

The EBA system makes transfers of money within one day, so there could be tremendous disruption if a bank fails during the hours a transaction is waiting to be completed within the system. The Bank of England's greatest concern in the row over Target is that it will discourage commercial banks from using the safest system.

STOCK MARKETS									
Index	Close	Day's change	Change (%)	1996 High	1996 Low	Volume	Index	Close	Day's change
FTSE 100	3990.70	+8.20	+0.2	4073.10	3632.30	3.99	Nikkei	6000	+10.00
FTSE 250	4379.50	+12.70	+0.3	4568.60	4015.30	3.61	Dow Jones	6400	+10.00
FTSE 350	1983.10	+4.40	+0.2	2022.10	1816.60	3.91	FTSE 100 Index	3990.70	+8.20
FTSE SmallCap	2138.67	+1.25	+0.1	2244.36	1954.06	3.23	FTSE 250 Index	4379.50	+12.70
FTSE All-Share	1956.25	+1.11	+0.2	1994.54	1791.95	3.86	FTSE 350 Index	1983.10	+4.40
New York	6303.71	-88.81	-1.5	6547.79	5032.94	2.05	FTSE SmallCap Index	2138.67	+1.25
Tokyo	20561.20	-67.18	-0.3	22666.80	19724.70	0.791	FTSE All-Share Index	1956.25	+1.11
Hong Kong	n/a	n/a	n/a	10204.87	3.131				
Frankfurt	2647.08	+6.03	+0.2	2909.91	2253.36	1.611			

Statistics as of 13 December

INTEREST RATES									
Short sterling	UK medium gilt	US long bond	Money Market Rates	Bond Yields	Money Market Rates	Bond Yields	Money Market Rates	Bond Yields	Money Market Rates
1 Month	1 Year	1 Year	1 Month	1 Year	1 Month	1 Year	1 Month	1 Year	1 Month
6.02	6.88	7.09	7.39	7.76	7.56	7.56	7.56	7.56	7.56
US	5.72	5.66	6.37	5.74	6.61	8.06	6.37	5.74	6.61
Japan	0.28	0.47	2.47	2.64			2.47	2.64	
Germany	3.22	3.25	5.83	6.04	6.82	6.83	3.22	3.25	5.83

CURRENCIES									
£/\$	£/DM	£/¥	Pound	Dollar	£/\$	£/DM	£/¥	Pound	Dollar
1.6582	+0.25c	1.5382	1.6582	+0.25c	1.5382	1.6582	+0.25c	1.5382	1.6582
1.6570	+0.37c	1.5430	1.6570	+0.37c	1.5430	1.6570	+0.37c	1.5430	1.6570
1.6580	+0.83c	2.2181	1.6580	+0.83c	2.2181	1.6580	+0.83c	2.2181	1.6580
1.6785	+1.11c	156.20	1.6785	+1.11c	156.20	1.6785	+1.11c	156.20	1.6785
93.1	+0.2	83.0	93.1	+0.2	83.0	93.1	+0.2	83.0	93.1

OTHER INDICATORS									
Oil Brent \$	Gold \$	Gold £	Oil Brent \$	Gold \$	Gold £	Oil Brent \$	Gold \$	Gold £	Oil Brent \$
22.52	+0.37	18.06	22.52	+0.37	18.06	22.52	+0.37	18.06	22.52
388.20	+0.20	386.15	388.20	+0.20	386.15	388.20	+0.20	386.15	388.20
222.41	-0.21	250.88	222.41	-0.21	250.88	222.41	-0.21	250.88	222.41

SPOT RATES									
£/\$	£/DM	£/¥	£/\$	£/DM	£/¥	£/\$	£/DM	£/¥	£/\$
1.6582	+0.25c	1.5382	1.6582	+0.25c	1.5382	1.6582	+0.25c	1.5382	1.6582
1.6570	+0.37c	1.5430	1.6570	+0.37c	1.5430	1.6570	+0.37c	1.5430	1.6570
1.6580	+0.83c	2.2181	1.6580	+0.83c	2.2181	1.6580	+0.83c	2.2181	1.6580



giving
there
in light

He'll claim that he was never allowed the money or flexibility to do what he wanted with Granada's television interests. They'll claim he couldn't run a That's what happens when you get a difference of approach in business. The real problem, I suspect, is that Mr Lewis wants to be his own boss. He wasn't, either at Mercury or Granada. Mr Lewis is the type of executive who needs to be running his own show.

Month	Apr	May	June	July
Oil	53.00	58.00	64.00	62.00
Gas	11.70	12.70	13.70	14.70
Coal	12	12	12	12

Commodity	CBOT	NYMEX	London
Oil	53.00	58.00	64.00
Gas	11.70	12.70	13.70
Coal	12	12	12

Commodity	CBOT	NYMEX	London
Oil	53.00	58.00	64.00
Gas	11.70	12.70	13.70
Coal	12	12	12

Commodity	CBOT	NYMEX	London
Oil	53.00	58.00	64.00
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Commodity	CBOT	NYMEX	London
Oil	53.00	58.00	64.00
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Commodity	CBOT	NYMEX	London
Oil	53.00	58.00	64.00
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Commodity	CBOT	NYMEX	London
Oil	53.00	58.00	64.00
Gas	11.70	12.70	13.70
Coal	12	12	12

Commodity	CBOT	NYMEX	London
Oil	53.00	58.00	64.00
Gas	11.70	12.70	13.70
Coal	12	12	12

Commodity	CBOT	NYMEX	London
Oil	53.00	58.00	64.00
Gas	11.70	12.70	13.70
Coal	12	12	12

Commodity	CBOT	NYMEX	London
Oil	53.00	58.00	64.00
Gas	11.70	12.70	13.70
Coal	12	12	12

Commodity	CBOT	NYMEX	London
Oil	53.00	58.00	64.00
Gas	11.70	12.70	13.70
Coal	12	12	12

Commodity	CBOT	NYMEX	London
Oil	53.00	58.00	64.00
Gas	11.70	12.70	13.70
Coal	12	12	12

Commodity	CBOT	NYMEX	London
Oil	53.00	58.00	64.00
Gas	11.70	12.70	13.70
Coal	12	12	12

Commodity	CBOT	NYMEX	London
Oil	53.00	58.00	64.00

sport

Dettori story finds the going good

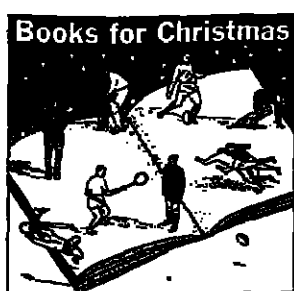
Only those who have pitched their tent in close proximity to a Shining Path guerrilla encampment recently will be unaware that Frankie Dettori's autobiography is on the shelves.

If there is a television programme that does not feature either Jill Dando or racing's laughing boy at the moment it must be on just after the millennium has risen. Dettori's ubiquity (he has appeared on *Top Of The Pops*, *The Big Breakfast*, *Smilie's People* and *Clive Anderson All Talk* among others) is explained by the publication of his life work to the age of 25.

This book was to have followed the format of those reliably terrible turf diaries and charted the path of a personality over a season's span. However, when Dettori was ejected by Shamsani at Newbury in June it may have hurt his elbow but it did no harm to *A Year In The Life Of Frankie Dettori* (Heinemann, £15.99) as the Italian was forced to investigate other areas. Thus we get a flavour of the teenager's spartan early days in Newmarket, though there is less discussion about another taste, for narcotics, which an immature Dettori sampled in 1992.

The main criticism of the book, as it is with most turf biographies, is that there is a nomad's attitude to dwelling when it comes to reflection on misdemeanours and mistakes. Nevertheless, given the popularity of the named author (who claims the book is just about all his own work) there is much to believe in the assertion of Dettori's management that the book is going well.

Michael Kinnane has, on the other hand, had a relatively barren season leading up to his authorised biography. Nevertheless, Michael Kinnane has done well to get a book out of a jockey who speaks as frequently as Pinocchio before Gopetto got his chisel out. *Mike Kinnane Big Race King* (Mainstream, £15.99) concerns a man who has reached the same heights as Dettori without a trace of the same level of enjoyment. The most compelling sections of this effort come



Richard Edmondson examines the latest literary offerings from jockeys, journalists and bookmakers

when Kinnane analyses his own character and manner. The jockey damns himself from his own mouth and occasionally sounds like the sort of bloke with whom you would not like to survive a shipwreck.

Timing has also been of the essence with David Ashforth, whose *Hitting The Turf* (Headline, £14.99) is available just after the author's deserved recognition as the racing writer of the year. This book is vaguely autobiographical and probably sharply distressing for the writer's family. Ashforth revels in his role as one of Britain's most serious unprofessional punters.

The sketches he provides are well-observed and, most importantly, in a sport that churns out enough romantic junk to fill Becher's Brook, they are real. It is quite simply the best racing book for some time.

Christmas is also the time when Graham Sharpe, William Hill's media relations manager, churns out one of his compilation books. Mrs Sharpe must get very annoyed with all those slivers of paper left behind the settee all year as hubby snips items that tickle him from the national press. *Odds, Sods And Racing Certs* (Robson Books, £14.95) has been done before, but it does possess the single greatest attribute this writer can think of. I'm in it.



Fab Five: Muhammad Ali meets the Beatles in Miami in February 1964. Ali was preparing for his fight against Sonny Liston. The Beatles had just appeared on the Ed Sullivan Show for the first time. The photograph, by UP/Bettmann is taken from Muhammad Ali: In Perspective by Thomas Hauser, published by Collins, £14.99

Varying accounts of the life of Jacques the lad

Jacques Villeneuve's dramatic impact on Formula One is about to be reflected in a race for book buyers. The in-house, glossy, lavishly illustrated offering is out of the pits ahead of the publication that has got the driver's camp hot under the collar. *The New Villeneuve* by Tim Collings (Bloomsbury).

While Collings endeavours to reveal the "warts and all" story of Jacques the lad, Villeneuve's *My First Season In Formula One* (Collins Willow, £20) written for the Canadian driver by Gerald Donaldson, charts a safer course, race by race to second place in the world championship

behind his Williams-Renault team-mate, Damon Hill.

Villeneuve represents the new generation in Formula One, a cavalier, unceremonious individual intent on conveying that very image. "I prefer people who are genuine and I try to be that myself," he says. "I wouldn't like to feel I was obliged to conform."

The 25-year-old former IndyCar champion has been enthusiastically embraced by some of the younger grand prix drivers. David Coulthard has welcomed him as a breath of fresh air, saying even Michael Schumacher has been charmed and influenced by him.

Derick Allsop casts a critical eye over the best motor racing books

There is little doubt Villeneuve has earned Schumacher's respect. His combative style was spectacularly characterised by the manoeuvre which took him round and past the German's Ferrari in Portugal. Villeneuve had suggested to his crew he might employ the oval-style tactic, and was quickly on the radio to tell them: "You see, it worked!"

The respect between Villeneuve and Schumacher is mutual. "While some drivers tend to get flustered and make mis-

takes in close encounters, others, like Michael Schumacher, know exactly what they are doing," Villeneuve says. No direct comparison with Hill and, indeed, Villeneuve congratulates the Englishman on his "deserved" title success and portrays an excellent working relationship. And yet, you are left wondering. Another candidate for Formula One's Crazy Gang is Eddie Irvine, and with help from Maurice Hanlon, the Ulsterman recounts his first season

with Ferrari, as well as earlier days, in *Green Races Red* (Collins Willow, £14.99).

Irvine, too, can give the impression he works at being "natural". And, in common with other members of the gang, he does not have a particularly high regard for Hill. He is critical of the way Hill handled the ill-fated negotiations for a new contract with Williams, and agrees with those who feel he is no match for Schumacher. "Nobody in equal equipment could beat Schumacher. That's the couple of drivers who could take him on in slightly superior cars," says Irvine. "I don't think Damon is the man."

Irvine has taken a pragmatic approach to life as Schumacher's No. 2. He accepts it, just as he accepts his team-mate's pre-eminence. If, however, the Williams is still beyond reach next season and Heinz-Harald Frentzen handles the pressure, Irvine believes Frentzen "will walk it". In *Irvine, The Luck Of The Irish* (Patrick Stephens, £9.99), Adam Cooper, like Collings, develops his own picture without direct assistance from the driver concerned. Derick Allsop's book, *Michael Schumacher: The Formula One Success* (Ebury Press, £17.99), will be reviewed in next Monday's sports section.

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Summer jumping 'ridiculous'

Josh Gifford blamed summer jumping and moderate racing for the plethora of small fields after saddling Yorkshire Gale to win a two-horse race at Cheltenham yesterday. Gifford said fields will not improve while the racing programme, which now includes summer jumping, caters for moderate horses.

He said: "These races cut up because there are not enough good horses to go round and never will be while the powers-that-be look after moderate horses. If they stopped summer jumping, it would help racing in the autumn. Even in the days of Arkle there were three- or four-runner races, but the public came to watch because there were good horses to see."

"I've got Major Summit but nowhere to run him. He must either take on the big boys, which he is not ready for, or carry top weight in a handicap. There are not enough races to educate nice young quality horses. There are more horses than ever, but they are bad ones. My moderate horses have won more times this year because I can't find races for the better ones."

And he added: "Summer jumping is the most ridiculous thing to have happened to racing and, as for all-weather racing, who wants it? The jockeys cover their faces with masks but what about the poor old horses who have to suck in all the dirt and sand?"

HYPERION

700 Super Chappy 150 Arapl 800 Superficial 8.30 High Premium 9.00 Potokain 9.30 Gards

GOING: Standard.

STALKE 7.11m 87 - outside, rest - inside.

DRAW ADVANTAGE: high from 8ft to 1m 4L.

Firework, left-hand, oval course.

Centre is north of town on A449. Wolverhampton station one mile away. ADJUDICATION: Club 515; Tattersall 50 (OAP members of Diamond Club 54) Viewing 12.00pm. 12.00pm including entrance and meal. CAR PARK: free.

RECORDED FIRST TIME: See The Pavilion (8.30).

WINDMILL IN LAST SEVEN DAYS: None.

LONG DISTANCE RUNNERS: Forester (9.00) sent 181 miles by J.J. O'Neill from Shelton Wood End, Cambridgeshire.

7.00 MEASURE MAIDEN STAKES (CLASS D) 2,400 added 270 1m 100yds

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Mountbrowne has luck on his side

Ireland sends over serious representation for the main races of the day at Cheltenham this afternoon, though it is difficult to decipher whether they are there for the money or just a reconnaissance mission in advance of the Festival in March.

The developing economics of the countries separated by the Irish Sea mean that animals from the land of Arkle no longer have to be ferried regularly to Britain in search of meaningful return.

"Prize money over jumps here has improved a lot, so there is not so much need to travel," Ted Walsh, the Irish commentator, said yesterday. "It used to be at Christmas that you had to go to the King George VI Chase at Kempton, but now we've got a £50,000 chase at Leopardstown (the Ericsson Chase) and other races worth tens of thousands. 20 years ago they were worth £1,000 a time."

"Okay, Cheltenham is still the big one, but there is no need any

more to go after all the prizes. Arkle had to do it in his heyday because the prize money over here was a pittance."

Ted Walsh is Ireland's one-man job centre. The former champion amateur rider is now a trainer, horse dealer, writer and broadcaster to name just a smattering of his postings. There can never be peaceful nights then for either the butcher, baker or candlestick maker near his Greenhills yard at Naas in Co. Kildare, though there is one job out of Walsh's reach, that of his nation's outstanding trainer.

Whenever this honour comes along it seems to be bestowed on a chap by the name of O'Brien. On the Flat, in the old days, Vincent was nonpareil, now Aidan (no relation) is soaring higher than a swift.

O'Brien has a runner in both the Tripleprint Gold Cup and the Bula Hurdle at Prestbury Park this afternoon as he tries to improve on a mediocre ear-

Richard Edmondson says the big race at Cheltenham can go to an Irish raider

ly record in Britain. "When Aidan goes over to England he's taking on decent horses in decent races, and it's not like over here where he has the bulk of the runners and he's winning a lot of little races as well," Walsh explained. "I've no doubt that, if he was based in England, he would take the place by storm."

"It's a bit like saying that Martin Pipe hasn't dominated racing in Ireland, even though he's done it at home. You don't

have that many runners away from your own racing."

O'Brien's runner in the Tripleprint is Royal Mountbrowne, who has enjoyed the sort of kind fortune this season for which his land is proverbially recognised. Merry Gale surrendered to him at Clonmel and Fairbrother, and Imperial Call, the Gold Cup winner, also threw himself to earth at the latter track with victory seemingly assured. Nevertheless, Royal Mountbrowne (next best 240)

Sound Reveille doubly engaged

The chaser Sound Reveille is engaged twice today, the 1.25 race

at Cheltenham and the second preference is for the 1.15 at Haydock.

RICHARD EDMONDSON
NAP: Tullymurry Toff (Haydock 1.45)
NB: Royal Mountbrowne (Cheltenham 2.40)

will be there at the finish. But each-way value may be found with MARCHMARTIN MING. This four-year-old showed a lot of promise last season and can be expected to show improved form now he has two and a half miles for the first time.

2.15: Rough Quest is said to be big game for his season, but he is, however, and should be watched, as should Nathaniel Lad, whose stable has been out of form. Kadi was never put into the race when a 27-length third behind Dublin Flyer at Wincanton last month. With that res-

pearance effort under his belt, a bolder show is on the cards today, though whether he can overcome the classy ONE MAN is doubtful.

2.40: CAROLE'S CRUSADER, who beat Flying Gunner by nine lengths in a three miles contest at Ascot recently, looks a useful staying hurdler in the making and will be hard to beat. Southern Nights may prove the biggest danger.

2.45: LARGE ACTION, who beat Cockney Lad by a comprehensive six lengths in the Grade One Hatton's

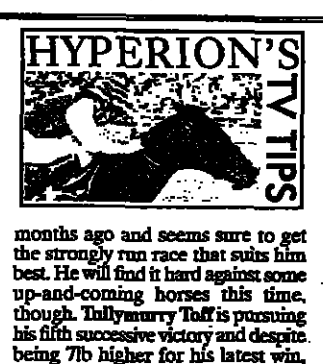
Grace Hurdle over 2½ miles at Fairyhouse earlier in the month, looks a class above today's rivals. Although he may be better for the run, Pridwell looks the chief threat.

2.45: ADDITION BOY, who ran a creditable race on his reappearance to about four lengths third to Challenger Du Lac and the school's quest First National Handicap Chase winner Strong Promise in the Murphy's Gold Cup Handicap chase over 2m 4f 110yd on the Old course here in November, can make his class count over the extra 110 yards on the

New course. The progressive Bertone may be the danger.

3.15: GENERAL PONGO, who won a novice's handicap chase by 1½ lengths from Whiffy at Bangor last time, is marginally preferred to Imperial Vintage, who is proven over these testing fences but came to grief on his latest venture.

3.45: KARSHI, 1½ lengths second to Balaan in a 2m 3f handicap hurdle at Warwick, can go one better. Mandys Mantline looks the threat.



HYPERION'S TV TIPS

1.15: Bold-jumping Clay County made all the running to win here in January. On the same handicap mark now, Russ Garrimy's mount is capable of setting up a lead and is often hard to catch. POLITICAL TOWER was runner-up in this race last year off a 9lb lower mark. But the eight-year-old's fencing has improved since and his rider, Tim Reed, will be aiming to deliver a decisive late challenge.

1.45: Home Counties was the victor in this highly competitive event 12

HAYDOCK

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Little Miss Firecracker

John
Walsh
meets...
Imelda
Staunton



It's Broadway in the Depression. The streets are full of unemployed drifters and sad-eyed losers, hoping to strike it rich gambling on the gee-gees or the roll of dice. Thrills are hard to come by in this aleatoric wasteland, but one place you can guarantee them is the Hot Box nightclub. A white piano, a quintet of foxy babes in a bewildering variety of shapes who parade about in spangly tulle and acres of leg—and then, from behind the tacky red Hot Box curtains, there bursts an extraordinary sight: a miniature, 5ft Meissen shepherdess, but with added fishnet thighs and huge pumpkininny smile. She sings Frank Loesser's farmyard-love classic "A Bushel and a Peck" with a catch in her voice, a weird eldritch squeak, and she sways across the stage wielding her pastoral crook like a guitar or a scythe, so that the tall horse-limbed dancing girls have to duck out of its way. She is a tiny force of nature. She is irresistibly gorgeous. At the song's climax, with the Hot Box babes going chook-chook around the piano, the shepherdess throws handfuls of corn to the first few rows of the audience, who grab it ecstatically. Gentlemen in expensive suits try to establish eye contact with the singer who is so cheekily, so Diamond-Lil-ishly, making them eat out of her hand...

But this is not Broadway, nor the Depression, nor a nightclub, nor a porcelain figurine. This is the National Theatre's new production of *Gyps and Dolls*, which Richard Eyre first staged in 1982, to the collective rapture of London theatregoers. In those days, Imelda Staunton played the smallest and dullest of the Hot Box girls, dancing behind Julia McKenzie, who sang Miss Adelaide, the shepherdess role. Two years later, McKenzie left and Staunton, with a certain apprehensiveness, took over. Now, 12 years later, she's back in the part. And watching *Gyps and Dolls* again, one is amazed how much Staunton has not just made the part her own, eclipsing all memory of McKenzie's rather drooping and pathetic Adelaide, but how she has made it seem a far greater role. In La Staunton's hands, "the well-known fancée" becomes a complex figure—good-hearted but calculating, chronically disappointed but endlessly optimistic, dim but not glib, dying to marry her feckless boyfriend, Nathan Detroit, impresario of the permanently floating crap game, but longing to knock him into shape, shushily romantic but one of the girls, a wise-cracker, a shrew, a sexpot... Why you'd think you were watching some bittersweet American version of *Everyman* there on stage.

The key word is "bittersweet", of course. Imelda Staunton has been playing bittersweet for years, on stage, on television, in movies. Her presence in sitcoms like *It's a Wonderful Life* or comedy dramas like *Up the Garden Path* or literary-canon movies like *Sense and Sensibility* or comedy-mysteries like Joan Smith's teatime of the air of frustration, of unfulfilment or brawny-borne melancholy, that waits around her like a watermelon smile, her smart-cookie manner conceals a broken heart. It also means she can play anything, from Shakespeare to Chekhov to Sondheim to a telly slouch, without undue strain.

But who is she really? Is her disposition sweet or bitter? The first shock, when you meet her, for lunch at the National's ritzy Mezzanine restaurant, is how alarmingly Celtic she looks. Out of make-up, out of costume and character, she is a mass of red curls, angry blue eyes and rough windblown complexion. She resembles a Galway tinker, only without the shawl and the cardboard box. Her hard little eyes could be those of an IRA moll. And though you soon warm to her straight, confiding manner ("What exactly is *osso buco*? Is it? Yerrh?") one remains a little wary of her. Prolonged exposure to Mayo redheads would suggest that she could have a filthy temper. Does she? "No, I don't have a temper," she says pleasantly. "Although of course that's not healthy. I can't even say 'No, I'm not doing that...' without getting upset. I can't argue. I can be very clear about what I want, but I won't shout about it. I'm better at getting ahead of things. I'm not good at conflict, but I'm good at sensing it in the distance and defusing it."



'Chronically disappointed but endlessly optimistic': Imelda Staunton rehearsing the part she made her own, Adelaide, in 'Gyps and Dolls'

Photo: John Haynes

I thought of Adelaide's on-off romance with Nathan, their screaming matches, their ill-matched temperaments, her determination, his constant retreat. Could she empathise? "I think Henry [Goodman, who plays Nathan] and I have a very good relationship. You feel he really loves her. He gets distracted a lot but, when he's with her, he really loves her. You feel it's not just a battle on her own, that I've really got to get this guy." Staunton habitually mixes up characters and actors like this, when talking about the part. It's as if her identification with Adelaide slides in and out of character all the time. So does her sense of Adelaide as a girlfriend, a singer, a fictional character and a good part to play. As we teased out the moral strands of the play, she said, "What I think is, the four main characters all grow up a bit in this story. Sarah [the Salvation Army virgin] who thinks, this is how my life is going to be, gets shown it can be other things as well. Adelaide decides she'll marry Nathan no matter what he is. Nathan gets a job on a news stand, Sky Masterson discovers it's all right to do something virtuous—they all make good journeys, and that's always interesting. And of course, if you get to sing in a nightclub at the same time, that's a nice perk costume-wise..."

Staunton gives a tremendous on-stage impression of a Tin Pan Alley trouper. She practically bursts with emotion during "Adelaide's Lament", she hams up the Monroe-esque "Take Back Your Mink" with vigour, she rants like a tennant in "Sue Me", turning the last "When I think of the times..." into a single exasperated, wordless scream. It comes as a slight shock to discover that she doesn't actually care for the form at all.

"Audiences like *Gyps and Dolls* because it's a very good play. The songs are good too, yeah, but you could perform it without the songs and still have a very good play. I just don't like a lot of musicals. I think a lot of them are crap. They're weak. Often you get a crap script and a couple of good songs, and you're supposed to think you've had a good night out. It's just not good enough." Gosh, there was one she really really hated? "Oh, there was *Mack and Mabel*, which I did at Nottingham—great songs, terrible book. It's so frustrating. And I always want the songs to further the action. Not many of them do. The show stops, it's a song, the show starts again. It's so..." She speared a mouthful of monkfish, having turned down the Bayonne ham that was supposed to accompany it; she's a meat vegetarian, but not a fish vegetarian. "And when I was asked to do *Into the Woods*, they sent me a tape to listen to

and the music went [she adopts a prancing, children's-TV delivery] "Into the woods alone alone, into the woods..." and I just went [she mimes switching off a tape] "Off! I don't think so." But she was in *Into the Woods*... "Oh, Richard Jones persuaded me to do it and I enjoyed it very much. But I'm not a great fan of Sondheim, and he knows it and is very nice to me." You don't like his lyrics? "I just like a tune." The tuneful, musical-hating Staunton grew up in



north London. Both her parents were from the west of Ireland, her father a building contractor, her mother a hairdresser. "She was the fiery one, my father was the calm one. That's where it all [ie acting] comes from, the Celtic thing." The family (Imelda was an only child) lived over the shop. As a child, her taste in showbiz was for mid-century Americana. "I was a bit of a Frank Sinatra fan, people like him. When I was 11 or 12, I used to watch Dean Martin and Sinatra movies. I loved all that. I was a rather old-fashioned child. I liked Tony Curtis when I was 11. I always liked the Forties, at least the showbiz period. And I noticed how, when we got our costumes for *Gyps and Dolls*, all the guys said, 'Why don't we dress like this anymore?'"

She went to a convent school, the La Sainte Union in Highgate, run by an order of French nuns, and has happy memories of the place—she's been back as a distinguished old girl, to talk to the Sixth Form. Part of the curriculum was a class in elocution, run by a Miss Stoker. She took a shine to the small but volcanic Imelda, encouraged her and steered her towards Rada. "I'm not sure what she saw in me. Maybe a future. But I was quite versa-

tile, and she used to get me to perform at drama festivals. I used to do funny pieces like "The Maid on the Phone". You remember *The Three Faces of Eve*, that Joanne Woodward movie? She re-cast it for me as a monologue. And then she started a drama class after school..."

The super-critical Miss Stoker got her protégée into Rada. She left at 20, in 1976, and her career took off. She joined the RSC and then in 1982,

'Out of make-up, out of costume and character, she is a mass of red curls, angry blue eyes and rough windblown complexion'

only six years after drama school, the National Theatre. She went through a dozen "small funny lady" parts (including *The Fair Maid of the West* for the RSC), before determinedly branching out into Chekhov and Dennis Potter; she was the deeply nasty Nurse White in *The Singing Detective*. Of the people she has dealt with, she comes over most luvvie-ish about David Toguri, the Japanese American choreographer of *Gyps and Dolls* ("He's an absolute genius. He makes dancers look like actors and actors look like dancers") and most defensive about Kenneth Branagh, who directed her in both *Much Ado about Nothing* and *Peter's Friends*. "I'm very protective about him because he's quite fantastic but the press don't seem to think so. Anyone who's ever worked for him knows his drive and energy and enthusiasm. You couldn't find a better producer, a better enabler than him." Was she in the Branagh *Hamlet*? "No. It's a bloody oversight..."

It reminded her of the Goldie Hawn line in *The First Wives Club*, about how the only roles currently available to women are the girlfriend, the District Attorney and *Driving Miss Daisy*. Staunton laughed,

having rarely been out of work for more than a fortnight. "That's an old one, the whinge about women in the theatre. I think playwrights are writing better and better parts for women. But you have got to keep taking parts as long as you can and not turning things down, because when you're 50 or 55, you'll start to run out."

Though she recently turned a mere 40, there is a distinct trace of incipient grande dame about Imelda. It's only noticeable when she's talking about her peer group of leading ladies, as if she has now joined their august company and it was time everyone knew about it. "There are lots of good parts around at the moment. Have you seen Janet McTeer in *A Doll's House*? The most breathtaking performance you'll ever see. If she doesn't get an Olivier award for that—if bloody Diana Rigg gets one [for *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*] and Janet doesn't, I'm going to be most pissed off..."

From her current perspective—happily married to the actor Jim Carter, with a bay daughter Bessy Beatrice, aged three—she considers the chronic yearning of the "character" actress, forever wondering where the next job is coming from. "I suppose I did spend a lot of time thinking, 'I wish I was playing that' or 'Why can't I be in that?', and I'm so glad to have stopped all that. I've lost that pathetic need. It's not that I don't care any more. But if I didn't work for the next year or so, it'd be fine, as long as we could pay the mortgage."

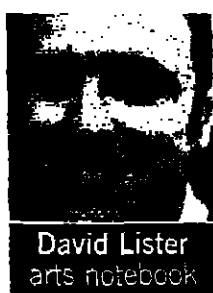
But what would she do if she didn't act? "I could get a job in a drama school." She means it. Imelda Staunton is giving up singing Adelaide at the end of the present NT run in March, and not coming back for the big, all-thro'-the-summer run. But since she's turned the part into the biggest prima donna role on the London stage, was there anything more important?

"My life?" she says with an interrogative lift. "I just want to be at home with the baby. We may do another series of the sitcom [*Is It Legal?*] in August and I can't think of anything nicer than to have April, May and June at home. I have my cake and I want to eat it all. I want to play this part and I want to go home." And with that, the equilibrial and straightforward actress who currently inhabits the soul of ditty Everywoman with such passionate conviction on the Olivier stage, took herself off to be photographed, practising her Bader-Meinhof scowl for the camera. *Gyps and Dolls*, Olivier, RNT, London, SE1 (0171-928 2252) now previewing

Andrew and the Amazing Technicolor lawsuit

Those whose cultural reading may not extend to the court cases on the foreign pages of *The Stage* have missed a little treasure. A judge in New York has dismissed a claim for \$78.09 by a certain Andrew Lloyd Webber. As this sum would barely buy Sir Andrew a brunch in New York and the case was considered serious enough for a four-day non-jury trial, this was all rather puzzling. Reading on, it becomes more so.

Sir Andrew's claim was in fact a counter-claim against composer Ray Repp for allegedly stealing a song from his musical *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*. The \$78.09 was



David Lister
arts notebook

the sum that Repp's song "Till You" had generated over the years—a heartless statistic to have read out in open court, but counter-claiming composers will stop at nothing when their honour is questioned.

Repp had actually sued Lloyd Webber first in 1990 claiming he had taken "Till

You" and turned it into the theme song from *Phantom of the Opera*. Lloyd Webber agreed to "borrowing" the song, but not from Repp. He claimed it was taken from his own song "Close Every Door", which was indeed in *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*, and therefore if any illegal borrowing had been done it was by Repp. Anyway, Repp's suit was thrown out in 1994. Repp appealed and Lloyd Webber filed his counter-claim.

At this point, one stops to marvel at the musical literacy of American judges. Dismissing the Lloyd Webber counter-claim, Judge Shirley Wohl Kram stated: "Although the songs

share some musical devices, such as rising arpeggios and descending tetrachords, such tools are among the most common devices used in music." Just the sort of throwaway lines they come out with at Lincoln's Inn. Happily both Repp and Sir Andrew have said they will appeal in their respective suits, so we can look forward to another memorable brush off for someone from Judge Shirley Wohl Kram.

It's also noteworthy that while Sir Andrew denied plagiarising any of Repp's material, he did admit to using works of Bach, Grieg and Holst for "Close Every Door". All happily out of copyright, but Repp managed to trump that. "Till

You" has lyrics taken from the book of *Luke*.

It was a surprise to hear Sir Peter Hall say that he will be directing his first *King Lear* next year when he opens his new company at the Old Vic. To run the RSC and National Theatre for a quarter of a century and miss out on *Lear* is close to carelessness. It was also a surprise as when Sir Peter returned to Stratford upon Avon to direct *All's Well That Ends Well* a few summers ago, the RSC publicity material claimed this was the one Shakespeare Sir Peter had never directed. Actually there are a few still to do including *Much Ado About Nothing* and *King John* as well as *Lear*, he told me. But

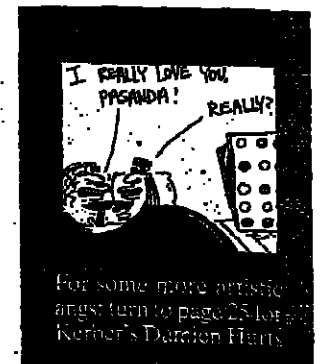
why let the facts get in the way of a good press release?

Life is unpredictable for Lynn Redgrave at the moment. *This Is Your Life* surprised her after her one-woman show at the Haymarket Theatre, with sister Vanessa rushing over with stage snow in her hair. And last weekend Lynn flew to Washington to attend the Kennedy Arts Awards at the White House. Meeting President Clinton, she was ready with "you don't know me but" when he said: "Hey, I've just seen your new film, *Shine*. I had a home screening." So the President of the United States has private screenings of low

budget Australian-made movies. Is he a secret arts junkie? Or does he just have time on his hands?

A Christmas lesson from the Academy of St Martin in the Fields. Not just a lesson in good housekeeping, though unlike any other major British orchestra, it receives no government subsidy and remains the most recorded chamber orchestra in the world. Its real lesson is in how to combine a concert with the season of goodwill. Next Tuesday at the Queen Elizabeth Hall, the concert culminating in Beethoven's First Symphony will involve audience and performers bringing a shoebox or other suitable container full of

practical items such as socks, shoes, blankets and food, which will be distributed among the homeless. The Shoebox Concert (box-office number 0171-960 4242) could set a seasonal lead and not just for orchestras. Roll on the shoebox pantomimes.



For some more artistic angst turn to page 25 for John Korman's Dutton Hunt.

arts & books

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Put away childish things

Paul Taylor reviews
alternative theatrical
fare for younger people

At this time of year, children find themselves squeezed – figuratively speaking – at both ends. Instead of acting in shows developed from improvisation and real pupil input, all too many glazed, over-rehearsed, middle-class schoolkids will have had to take part in Christmas “entertainments” penned by adults. And what’s worse, just the kind of adults who think it’s huge fun if children are given, on occasion, archly “grown-up” lines to say – thus essentially leaving them out of the joke and feeling unsure about what exactly the audience is laughing at.

Required to impersonate spurious sophistication as performers, children are conversely expected, as consumers, to chaperone their parents to shows that gratify an adult’s distorted nostalgia for lost innocence. As is the case every year, the country is awash with stagings of *Peter Pan* – from the thrillingly large scale, such as Matthew Warchus’s spectacular, airborne and emotionally painful rendering at the West Yorkshire Playhouse, to the charmingly intimate – like the version directed by Dylis Hamlett at the Watermill, Newbury, which finds cheeky ways of getting round the problem that, in this confined but beautiful space, flying is out.

JM Barry, who had sad biographical reasons for wanting to put perpetual prepubescence on a plinth, can be credited with creating the most supremely blackmailing moment in world drama. Poor Tinkerbell, having turned up trumps and drunk the poison to protect Peter, is about to wrinkle her last twinkle. But then “She says – she says she thinks she could get well again if children believed in fairies! Say quick that you can believe! If you believe, clap your hands!” As a child, I used to wonder how you were supposed to clap your hands when both your arms were being twisted behind your back.

Not that I’m against this moment. Yesterday, reviewing Jonathan Miller’s joylessly rationalist *Midsummer Night’s Dream*, I argued that it came across as the work of someone who, when he was a child watching *Peter Pan*, would have allowed Tinkerbell to die, rather than clap his hands. This was intended as an insult. You wouldn’t want your children not to clap, or never to have believed in fairies: on the other hand, wouldn’t it be fairer to them, after a certain age, to come clean and make a joke of the comical, sad fact that it’s also to buttress adult illusions that they are being asked to applaud? This would constitute as bracing an introduction as any to the bizzarries of the grown-up world and its peculiar demands on children.

That moment in *Peter Pan* has been given shrewd creative twists by other writers. Towards the end of Beryl Bainbridge’s fine novel, *An Awfully Big Adventure*, the heroine, a young member of a professional rep company putting on *Peter Pan*, hears that the seasoned old pro playing Captain Hook, with whom she has been having underage sex, has apparently committed suicide. It’s her job to flash the torch on the mirror that creates the illusion of Tinkerbell. That night, though, “Stella dropped the torch and let it roll into the wings as the children brought their palms together to save Tinkerbell. The light swished from the back-cloth. For a moment, the clapping continued, rose in volume, then died raggedly away, replaced by a tumult of weeping...” A wonderful objective correlative for the death of the remnants of this girl’s innocence.

In Steven Spielberg’s movie, *Hook*, the Tinkerbell scene, played by hispano-American schoolchildren, is interrupted by the sound of a mobile phone. This belongs to Robin Williams’s Peter, a repressed lawyer who takes his work everywhere and is almost



Beauty and the Beast? Liz May Price and Simon Gregor at the Young Vic

PHOTO: PAU ROS

frightened of spending time with his kids. Why? Because he’s “in denial” that he was once Peter Pan and lived in Neverland. This fascinating mess of a movie should be compulsory additional viewing for all children who go to the stage show because it’s an invaluable insight into the way adults often don’t even know the right questions, let alone the correct answers.

Hook is full of signs that Spielberg is aware that our conception of childhood innocence has changed radically since Barry’s day. “What is this – *Lord of the Flies* pre-school?” mutters an anxious Williams on rejoining the Lost Boys, who here are a jungle-dwelling, racially mixed gang of potential juvenile crime statistics. On the other hand, the movie buys into all that psychobabble about bonding with your inner child, and with Williams, as with most people who go on in this way, you hope that when they find their inner child, it turns out to be the school bully.

There are two very interesting alternatives to *Peter Pan*’s view of innocence now on in London. Adolescents would get something out of Strindberg’s peculiar fairytale-like *Swan White*, directed now by Timothy Walker at the Gate. People familiar with this dramatist’s *Easter*, with its useful heroine who can feel the pains of flowers and overworked telegraph wires, will appreciate that, rather as sentimentality is the opposite side of the coin to cynicism, a certain wetness with regard to innocence is

the corollary of Strindberg’s keen knowledge of the heart’s darkness. But this story of a young girl who, left to the mercies of her wicked stepmother, none the less eventually works her way up to a selfless love that can raise the dead and offer forgiveness, is a weird and refreshing change from panto.

Proving once again, though, that the Young Vic consistently produces the best young people’s Christmas shows, Laurence Boswell’s theatrically thrilling version of *Beauty and the Beast* is performed in an involving, presentational style. Not stinting on the knock-about comedy and properly scary with its spooky tall doors in the aisles, behind which all manner of fearful things may lurk, Boswell’s version is also an imaginatively haunting meditation on the idea (as *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* puts it) that “Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind”. The show is salutary for two other reasons. The Prince turns out to be a quirkily attractive rather than your standard dish. And when Beauty’s prevarications kill the Beast, instead of finding her inner child, Beauty here finds her inner grown-up.

Peter Pan: West Yorkshire Playhouse (0113-244 2111); Watermill, Newbury (01635 46044). *Swan White*: The Gate, London W11 (0171-229 5387). *Beauty and the Beast*: Young Vic, London SE1 (0171-928 6363)

We two kingth

Cross-dressing, green fish and camcorders. Louise Levene on the delights of the nativity play

The cast list for the playgroup nativity went up. Alexander would play the Gold King, Jack would play the Myrrh King. There was a blank space in between.

“Who’s bringing the Frankincense?”

“Ah. Slight problem. Jonathan wants to be a Queen.”

The three-year-old’s harmless flirtation with cross-dressing didn’t seem too troublesome at first. Nobody was fool enough to ponder the implications for his sexuality at this early stage, and his mother wasn’t weeping for her unborn grandchildren. Besides, if he thought of himself as a Queen, no one need ever know: the robes (two metres of acetate lining and a bit of tinsel) are entirely unisex. “OK, Jonathan, you can be a Queen.”

Rehearsals begin.

“We three Kingth of Orwient are.”

“Ahem.”

“Yes, Jonathan?”

“I’m a QUEEN!” affirms Jonathan, stamping his little Start-rites.

“Yes, I know, we agreed. You’re a Queen.”

“So it should be ‘We two Kingth AND A QUEEN.’”

Mayhem at the manger is part of the charm of the school nativity play. Indeed for many, weary of the nauseating sight of small, reluctant and totally inept performers shuffling through the old “Have you room at the inn? / Have you booked?” routine, it is the sole reason for attending. For every fond parent on their knees in the front row with a camcorder, there is a sour and jaded granny longing for her brood to outgrow the whole sorry spectacle. The only fun she gets is when the shepherds, armed with authentic crooks by an inexperienced play leader, begin a full-scale fight in the stable straw.

Of course, this is a piece of cake compared with many of the problems that can arise when staging what was once a straightforward Christian pageant. The Pre-School Learning Alliance, anxious to reflect Britain’s religious and ethnic diversity, taken the view that Christmas shouldn’t get all the attention. In order to downplay the Christian element of the performance, nativity plays have come slightly adrift from the New Testament. Once upon a time the RE teacher would have looked young Jonathan in the stationary cupboard to learn Matthew 2, 1-12. Today playgroups are wary of antagonising other religions, and reluctant to force-feed the children of lapsed Anglicans with too much in the way of Christian doctrine. Very often the ritual alone is left, isolated from the texts that gave birth to it.

As a result, your average toddler tends to regard the holy family pageant as a fancy dress free-for-all. Mary, Joseph, Kings and the all-important “Baby Cheeses” are supplemented by soldiers, flower fairies, Ninja Power Rangers and anything else the dressing-up cupboard affords. No wonder the three-year-olds get confused. My local playgroup had a problem last year when explaining how Jesus’s birth is traditionally attended by a barnful of animals. The Chosen Sheep, decidedly underwhelmed by the prospect of attending the nativity in a fluffy off-white trouser suit, had a much better idea: having grasped the concept that the Holy Birth was open season for animal costumes, he dug out an iridescent green number and went as a fish.

And not an Aladdin among them...

Feeling pantophobic? From *The Witches* to *Frankenstein*, we review the best alternative Christmas shows in London

Dick Daredevil

Not content with producing a Christmas show that’s for the family, the Steam Industry have come up with a musical comedy that’s about the family, in particular about the role of fathers and the needs of sons. Set in London during the Blitz, Dick Daredevil tells the story of Billy Spratt and his mother, Rose. Billy’s father has been killed during the war, but numerous surrogate fathers abound. There’s Edmund, the feckless gay young man, who lives in Rose’s guesthouse, and shares in Billy’s innocent fantasies about the radio superhero Dick Daredevil. There’s Charles, the suave American officer, who Rose considers marrying to give Billy a man around the house. And above all, there’s Daredevil himself, a red-blooded (and red-tinted) superhero, whose intergalactic exploits Billy avidly follows on his mother’s art deco radiogram.

When Edmund invents a machine that can travel to and from Dick’s world, Billy gets a chance to show his mettle against the evil space emperor Von Rippenclaw – and to see how Daredevil copes with wartime England. To Phil Willmott’s credit he manages to weave the subtext subtly into the action, rather than running it down the audience’s throat. Too subtly, perhaps. What should be the highlight of the piece, Billy’s encounter with Daredevil in London, is passed over with reckless haste. All too brief, the best scene – a bittersweet sequence in which Daredevil sets out with Billy to foil a Nazi plot against Churchill but ends up getting drunk in the pub – hints at what might have been.

All is not lost, though. Steven Markwick’s score doesn’t exactly send you out into Fitzrovia foot-tapping, but it runs the gamut from pastiche Cole Porter to pastiche Kurt Weill well enough. Sarah Payne puts in a fine singing performance as Billy’s plucky mum, and Von Rippenclaw (Howard Samuels) makes a first-class villain, waxing lyrical about the “patter of little jackboots”. If the twin morals – anyone can be a hero, and families don’t have to have fathers – ultimately seem a little put, well, maybe it would help to be closer to Billy’s age than Dick’s.

Adrian Turpin
The Drill Hall, 16 Chertsey Street, WC1 (0171-637 8270). To 18 Jan

Frankenstein: The Panto

Not Mary Shelley’s monster-maker but Frankie N Stein, porter at Herr Pumpernickle’s Bavarian hotel and brother of the culturally challenged Phyllis. Writer David Swan has co-opted Dracula and Dracula’s grandmother, Granula, into this low-budget hijinks, as well as a party of over-sexed schoolgirls and their only slightly less libidinous school mistress, Miss Nellie. As the self-regarding St Trinianette Bridget Boggie fights the chambermaid Heidi for the attention of Prince Ludwig, the dark count attempts to quench his thirst for virgin blood. Only a mad scientist with a penchant for peppermint saves the day.

Gillian King’s snappy little production shares features with the big-name, big-money pantomimes: shaving-foam pies, TV-inspired jokes (both television and transvestite) and a fondness for the words “bottom” and “knickers”. But the Tabard Theatre’s small space, as well as a young cast devoid of boxers and soap stars, make this a far more intimate affair, while John Asquith’s commanding Nellie (always on the right side of immodesty, even when performing a striptease) gives new life to the cliché “There is nothing like a dame.”

AT
Tabard Theatre, Chiswick W4 (0181-995 6035). To 21 Dec

The Witches

It’s a brave theatre that sells wands that light up in the dark before its Christmas production. So it’s a mark of David Wood’s adaptation of Roald Dahl’s novel, that *The Witches* isn’t lost behind a tinselly sea of swizzle sticks, borne aloft like cigarette-lighters at a Barry Manilow concert. You can put a lot of this down to Dahl’s compellingly idiosyncratic vision of what a witch is like: toeless, bald as a coot, possessed of blue spit and able to sniff out a child at 40 paces (apparently they smell of dog droppings). No surprise that the biggest laughs go to a joke about “DIY gravy” (guess) and a rodent trapped down a waiter’s pants.

But Wood, who also directs, never lets the snot-laden gags, or even the irritatingly cutesy puppet mice, distract from the plot. Nor is he afraid of silliness or to leave the stage almost bare when it suits his purpose. Dahl’s strange coming-of-age fable about the orphaned boy (a saccharin-free but winsome Karen Brit-

fett) who is transformed into a mouse comes through loud and clear, and is spared the happy-ever-after ending grafted on to last year’s Disney version. “How long does a mouse live?” asks the child condemned to spend the rest of his life avoiding cats and eating cheese. “Not very long, I’m afraid,” replies his grandmother. Moving, challenging and funny, *The Witches* is surprisingly intelligent fare for a West End children’s show. AT
Vaudeville, The Strand, London WC2 (0171-836 9987). To 18 Jan

Oedipus: The Pantomime

The show that’s not afraid to wear its eyes on its sleeve. Or so says the chorus. In fact, it’s more a case of the blind leading the blind. The plot doesn’t deviate that much from Sophocles’ original (though the old man may be looking down from Olympus scratching his head at a couple of deities called Terry and Juno). Unfortunately, it’s also not that much funnier. At the risk of sounding sick, the problem is that David Mitchell and Robert Webb’s script is curiously tame. It flirts with bad taste, but never quite goes all the way. And, let’s face it, what other reason can there be for doing *Oedipus* as a comedy than to plumb the depths? Still, if you’re so over-educated that the exchange “How are the Bacchi today?” “Oh, ecstatic as usual” makes you spit your sides, you may get some pleasure of it. Otherwise, go and buy Tom Lehrer’s song tribute to the king of Thebes, which does much the same job but in a 50th of the time.

AT
Pleasance, London N7 (0171-609 1800). To 12 Jan

Listen to the Wind

Before his death earlier this year, Vivian Ellis penned three new songs for *Listen to the Wind*, a jolly slice of Victoriana, already jam-packed with arch little tunes about wicked pirates, sea witches and dopey talking birds. The story follows three children abducted from their home on Christmas Eve and spirited away to the Palace of Winds, where they defeat the evil forces of Black Thunder Cloud, a baddie with a “stormy” personality.

After a sticky beginning, where the poor little rich girl becomes friends with her ruffian cousins, and the company sing an interminable pastiche parlour song called “Timothy’s Under the Table”,

the play takes off, bouncing airily through its fey fantasy, and scattering delicious lyrics along the way. Miranda, the raddled mermaid, delivers a pleasingly world-weary number about her transition from fishy female fable to “old sea cow” (“I used to be an actress at the Moules Marinieres, the only thing I wore was seaweed in my hair”) and the cast perform with gusto, but this 1954 musical certainly shows its age.

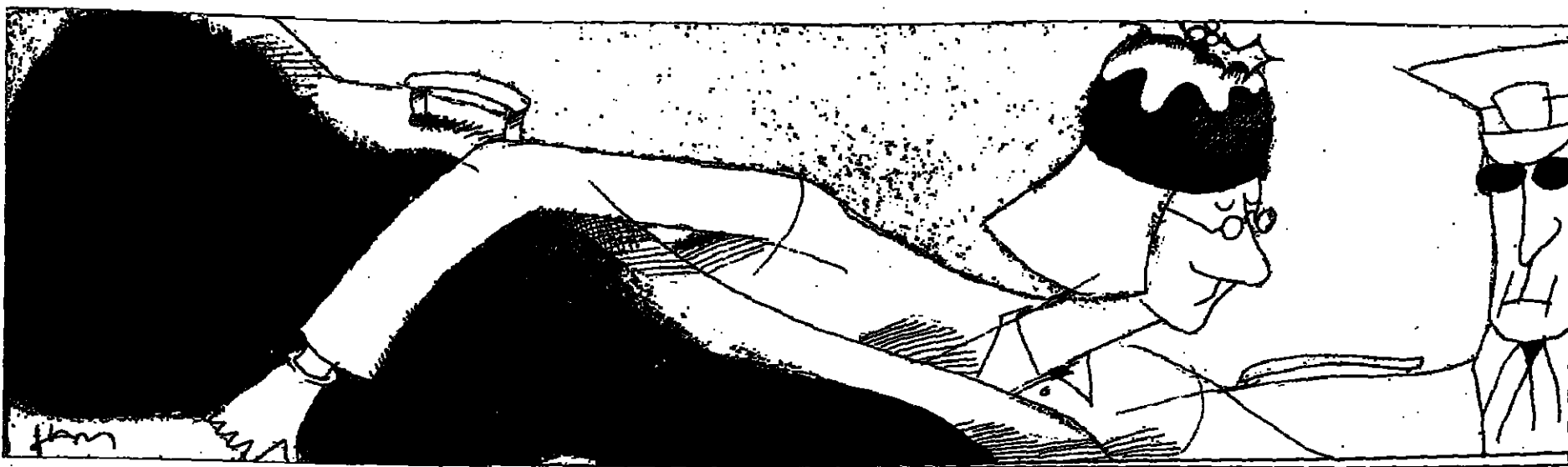
After two hours of drawing-room whimsy, you begin to feel as though someone has been force-feeding you glacé cherries. For little children, the adventure and magical set design should keep them rapt, but while grown-ups may relish Ellis’s precious punning about Miranda’s “larks” with “sharks”, you can’t help wonder what anyone between the ages of seven and constant will make of it all. If they’re not sniggering over the title, I suspect they may find it all a bit rich. AT
Liese Spencer King’s Head, Upper St. London N1 (0171-226 1916). To 19 Jan

The Servant of Two Masters

I still haven’t quite got over a distrust of Carlo Goldoni since going to see *Countess Marcella*, the National Theatre’s bum-numbingly leaden medley of the Italian’s work, in the 1980s. Ted Craig’s *Servant of Two Masters* is something else, whizzy as the top of a cappuccino (indeed, its chessboard and primary colours design is reminiscent of that masterpiece of aeriation, *Jan Judge’s RSC Comedy of Errors*). It’s also about as nourishing as cappuccino, but who’s to begrudge a little well-whisked fudge at Christmas?

The story is a kind of 18th-century cross between *Up Pompeii* and *Carry On Eating*, its hero the servant Buffalino, who runs himself off his feet trying to serve two masters at once. It’s full of clattering plates, slaps to the head, fast-swinging doors and a trifle the size of St Peter’s dome in Rome. There’s food in the audience, too, where tables have been set aside for patrons to eat and drink. If Miltos Yerolemou sometimes trips a little too hard to be liked as the eponymous manservant, there’s ample consolation in some finely drawn supporting performances, not least Richard Kane’s Venetian merchant as Jewish East End businessman, Pantalone. An enjoyable evening. AT
Warehouse Theatre, Croydon (0181-680 4060). To 26 Jan





The Suet crisis averted

You'd think that making your debut in Vienna's Musikverein might inspire a few nerves. But sheer terror? Ian Pillow recounts a wicked tale of breaking the British beef ban to save a few pence at Christmas

As the plane flies out of the low clouds on its descent to the airport, I see out of the window the city of Vienna spread below me. We, the members of the Bournemouth Symphony, are on our way to perform in the hallowed hall of the world-famous Musikverein (home to the mighty Vienna Philharmonic) and my first sight of the city sends waves of apprehension shivering through my body. Beads of sweat break forth on my brow.

One would expect the odd tingle of anticipation or even a small butterfly to flap lazily inside the ample stomach of an old dog scarred by many years of battle, but full-scale terror?

The reason is not so much the thought of performing to ears accustomed to hearing the world's finest orchestra, or facing the wrath of the world's most discerning critics. The truth is, I have become party to a daring international smuggling operation.

For on my person is concealed nothing less than my sister's Christmas pudding, destined for the larder of my niece in Frankfurt, where we are playing in a few days' time. (No, not in her larder. In the *Jahrhunderthalle*.)

When I had airily agreed to save my sister the postage stamps, I had not realised the full implications of my actions.

The alarm bells started ringing in the band room a few weeks ago when my colleagues were relating the tale of a violinist who had wanted to save money by packing a week's supply of Pot Noodles on a trip to Finland, only to be thwarted by a rule forbidding the import of reconstituted meat.

And therein lies the problem. I feel sure that the pudding will have been made of beef suet, and as Germany and British beef are not exactly best buddies at the moment, it would almost certainly be a no-no. Getting

caught with it would be worth at least two years in Spandau.

Just think of the headlines if the story broke. "Orchestra's performance contaminated by BSE-carrying viola player." What's more, I have learnt that if the orchestra is delayed while the pudding is sent off for analysis, making us late for the concert, we would incur a fine of £2,000. I feel the weight of the orchestra's success or failure on my shoulders. The pudding might, of course, be made from vegetarian suet, but being an ancient Pillow recipe, and looking at surviving ancient Pillows, that seems unlikely.

I therefore had an awkward decision to make. I could have put the pudding in a suitcase, which might have been less likely to be searched. But as our ancient BAC 111 plane (chartered from Airfix Airways) allowed such a ludicrously low weight limit, there would only have been enough weight left for a cuff-link.

So hand luggage it had to be. The tin foil wrapped round the pudding has already set the metal detectors ringing at Bournemouth airport. Having to declare the pudding and watch it sail imperiously along the conveyor belt in front of the whole orchestra was a demoralising experience.

Somehow the phrase "It's only a Christmas pudding" – uttered in one's own language, at one's home town airport – doesn't exactly sound John Le Carré, but here in a strange land and with only "ein Kaffee bitte" to get me out of trouble, this moment of reckoning is awe-inspiringly terrifying.

I did have the idea of sneaking the pudding out of the hold-all by the carousel where the luggage is first spewed out, and surreptitiously popping it into my suitcase the moment the case appeared; but there isn't room for it. Alternatively I could plonk the pudding on to the

carousel, rush to the other end and pick it off right under the nose of the customs official, exclaiming loudly, "Aha! Here is my sister's 100 per cent vegetarian Christmas pudding, which is going to the poor people of Vienna," but my German phrasebook doesn't quite run to that. Nor, fortunately, does "Seize that man: he has a suet pudding" occur in too many of the phrasebooks belonging to those colleagues who have threatened to blow the lid off the whole scam with that one devastating sentence.

"Don't worry. Just walk normally," says one of my more sympathetic companions.

I have never "walked normally" to order in my life before. I suddenly can't remember how to do it. Put one foot in front of the other and transfer the weight from the back of the front foot to the front of the front foot and lift the back of the back foot and carry it to the front. The dummy run (walk?) is not a success, particularly as, in order to appear nonchalant, my gaze is thrust 90 degrees upwards while I try to whistle "The Blue Danube". A less than wise choice – the sixth note onwards is way out of range. (You try it.) The total effect is odd – a curious lurch like a slow-motion ice-skating kangaroo emitting occasional high-pitched squeaks at the ceiling.

Eventually a semi-satisfactory choreography is achieved as I limp through the "Nothing to Declare" channel like a paraplegic crab – head bowed away from the customs official to my right, and the hold-all hard against the left leg and the china basin with its reinforced concrete contents painfully bombarding my left knee. I have changed my repertoire to "The Radeletsky March".

The play works like a charm. I am through. After the pressures of international crime, playing in the concert is so easy-peasy that I can

only assume the standing ovation and shouts of "Bravo!" are in recognition of my fearless heroism against officialdom. A veritable Robin Hood among viola players.

I can now sit back and enjoy the rest of the trip.

There are a few dress problems in Frankfurt. I am playing the concert in soaking wet clothes, having completely forgotten about the law of displacement ("When a large body is immersed in a small bath...") and allowed a tidal wave of soapy water to overflow the bathroom floor upon which my concert dress lay waiting.

One of the coach drivers has off-loaded a case containing an oboist's concert clothes at the hotel instead of at the hall where they are needed. Our tour guide has taken a taxi back from the hall to the hotel, picked up the case, taxied back and left the case in the taxi. The taxi has now returned to the hotel and deposited the case with the porter, who has gone and put a violinist's case on to a coach belonging to another orchestra that is now heading for the other end of the country.

This spanking new hotel boasts the latest hi-tech security system. You wave a plastic card hopefully in mid-air in the lift, whereupon you zoom up to the floor on which your room is located. Should you be invited on to another floor to inspect a friend's tea-making facilities, you have to go all the way down to reception and face an embarrassing interrogation.

"Warum gehts Sie zu fünfte Etage?"

"Ich möchte das Hanky Panky."

In the Bierkeller after the concert, we sit around discussing the shortcomings of the hanky-panky-proof hotel. "Someone with a criminal mind could crack the system."

All eyes turn on me.

Ian Pillow is a viola player with the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra

Twin peaks

CLASSICAL MUSIC
Katia and Marielle Labèque
Barbican Centre, London

Katia is the shorter sister, who frizzes her hair and has a wicked twinkle in her eye. Marielle looks like a Renaissance Madonna and acts like the elder. (There are two years between them, though I can never remember which way.) On Thursday night, Katia almost had to push Marielle into a second encore, a sort of fantasy on *The Entertainer*, by which time she was in party mood, all flailing arms and naughtily pointed fingers, which made the audience laugh. She might have been entertaining the boys in *Deszy Rides Again*. Perhaps Marielle sent her to bed without supper afterwards.

Of course, it's all an act. Two pianos are a rich, extravagant medium, with the potential for dramatic sparring, and the Labèques make the most of it. But they do really play together, as only dedicated duos can, and, despite Katia's antics, they don't overload the decibels. Which would have been so easy in the chaste classical language of Mozart's Sonata in F for two players at one piano, and his better-known Sonata in D for two pianos. Here, a little bit of contrast between them wasn't unwelcome, for Katia is the more brittle, percussive player, while Marielle sinks deeper into the keys and sustains a more resonant legato. The

sound reflected their different personalities.

It's odd that the original repertoire isn't larger, though writing for two pianos is a lot of work and there aren't so many good duos to reward the effort. But there are some sensational arrangements of orchestral music. Hearing Ravel's transcription of the first two of Debussy's *Nocturnes*, "Nuages" and "Fêtes", was almost more thrilling than hearing the original, because of the added frisson of discovering how the unlikely could be managed. The Labèques played both with a wonderful ear for Debussy's colours and textures, and judged *tutti* perfectly. Their fingerwork and ensemble were immaculate. A pity we didn't get the last *Nocturne*, "Sirenes", then Katia could have added the vocals.

Ravel's own *Rapsodie Espagnole* followed, as sultry and evocative as it was disciplined by understatement. It's such fastidious music, it hardly invites exaggeration. So the girls earned the right to go a bit flash, and launched into Michel Camilo's *Jazz on Fire*, one of their irresistible crossover numbers. Katia spinning a thin little tendril of a melody to begin, then both erupting in a tumultuous Latin tumble.

Adrian Jack



Labèque sisters: Immaculate fingerwork and ensemble

KEY	THE WEEK IN REVIEW			
	THE EXHIBITION		THE PLAY	
	Howard Hodgkin		A Midsummer Night's Dream	
	101 Dalmatians		Domingo sings Wagner	
	overview		critical view	
EXCELLENT	Hodgkin's lush, seemingly abstract paintings are actually intensely coloured evocations of people and places. Based on sketches, they are painted on wood, spilling across the frames, and are reworked over several years.		Jonathan Miller relocates Shakespeare's comedy to a 1930s world of rundown socialites with Princess Di-style lovers mirrored by faded aristocratic fairies. With Sylvester the Touzel, Angus Wright and Toby Jones.	
GOOD	Bryan Robertson revelled in "an intensely enjoyable and engrossing experience... life-enhancing and directly connected with the great humanist tradition." "Ravishing... the best paintings by one of the most indisputably great modern painters," gasped the <i>Mail</i> on Sunday. "A marvellously abandoned painter whose brilliance as a colourist enables his work to sing," gloried <i>The Times</i> . "Works like this come not from the head but from the heart" exulted <i>The Telegraph</i> .		Paul Taylor berated a "joyless" production, "the most thuddingly prosaic gloss on the English class system you've ever witnessed." "Only a fool could find it serious, revealing or funny," thundered the <i>FT</i> . "By the end Miller's vision is showing a touch of glaucoma: fuzziness, but there is bright clarity enough in the centre to satisfy," nodded <i>The Times</i> . "Clear as a bell... Miller's observant, inventive class comedy delights," nodded <i>The Standard</i> . "A triumph," squealed the <i>Mail</i> .	
OK	At the Hayward Gallery, South Bank; SE1 (0171-960 4242), to 23 Feb.		Almeida Theatre, London N1 (0171-359 4404), to 1 Feb.	
POOR	Disney's classic becomes a live-action movie with Joey Richardson, Jeff Daniels and Glenn Close in Anthony Powell's outlandish costumes as Cruella De Vil doing for dogs what she did for rabbits in <i>Fatal Attraction</i> .		Adam Mars-Jones was haunted by the spectre of <i>Home Alone</i> but admitted to "comic" and "thrilling" moments. "Hasn't director Stephen Herek seen <i>Babe</i> ? Patchy," growled <i>Time Out</i> . "Audiences will have a reasonably good time. Does the film bring all the rewards of its predecessor? Unfortunately, no," barked the <i>Times</i> . "The Christmas treat with spots on," yelped the <i>Standard</i> . "Close must have studied at the Fenella Fielding school for roccoco lip movement," panted the <i>FT</i> .	
DEADLY	Edward Seckerson was mightily impressed. "He sang splendidly... His final moments with Sigmund were quite extraordinarily beautiful. You can't put a price on singing like that." "As beautifully sung a Sigmund as you could hope to hear. He entered fully into both the spirit and the letter of the unconventional production," cheered <i>The Times</i> . "Will he please stop acting like a superstar, settle down for a couple of months and give us his Tristan?" prayed <i>The Telegraph</i> .		A one-off performance, alas.	
	An overwhelmingly powerful, deeply emotional experience. Compulsory viewing.		The dogs don't speak but the product placement is first-rate, ie Daniels and Richardson read <i>The Independent</i> .	
	Mostly unfunny, with no poetic magic. Like an Esther Williams movie without water.		A typically musical performance from an artist who more than lives up to the hype.	

NEXT WEEK: Four pages of arts, entertainment, Christmas services and walks in the Long Weekend. Plus: 14 days of TV in the Eye

THE TAILOR OF CHANAMAL

"a riotous, readable novel"

PETER MILLAR, *The Times*

le Carré

From Eatanswill to Foot's last stand

Robin Cook listens to the shining wits of Westminster

The Literary Companion to Parliament edited by Christopher Silvester, Sinclair-Stevenson, £30 The Oxford Dictionary of Political Quotations edited by Anthony Jay, Oxford, £15.99

Being a Member of Parliament is not a profession but an obsession. We work daily 12-hour shifts in its offices. We take three meals a day in its tea rooms and canteens. Our sense of reward is a speech well-received. Our sense of fun is a speech well-tackled.

Anyone who shares our obsession to the extent of producing 600 pages of memoirs about Parliament starts out with our prejudices behind him. I began by really wanting to admire the monumental fruits of Christopher Silvester's labour, but even a mutual obsession could not sustain my enthusiasm.

He produces some interesting facts for addicts of Trivial Pursuit – for instance, that the tea room consumed 224lbs of bacon rashers in an all-night sitting. But the overall effect is curiously lifeless and does not capture the passion, the venom or the grandeur of Parliament.

The first problem is that his *Companion* is not at all literary. I could find not any extract from the many novels that flit through Parliament. Dickens is cited as a sketch writer, but there is no quotation from *Our Mutual Friend* of the satirical dash to take the mood of the nation in Central Lobby, or from *Pickwick Papers* about the election for the Borough of Eatanswill. Incredibly, Trollope has not a single entry, although no literary figure has written more about Parliament or appeared more famously as the favourite reading of Conservative Prime Ministers.

Silvester's chief sources are MPs writing diaries for their own entertainment; but people writing privately about their own obsession tend not to produce great literature. It is unnecessary for him to include a spectacularly tedious chapter on great bores when most chapters provide adequate proof that MPs can indeed be bores. The second problem is that Silvester appears to be under the impression that Parliament was suspended at the time of the Suez Crisis and never reconvened. The half century in which the bulk of his potential buyers grew up is missing.

The chapter on ladies in Parliament



The Rights of a Seditious Politician: Paine is burned on a bonfire of his 'Rights of Man' stoked by Pitt. A kilted Dundas dances as Burke directs the merriment. Published 16 January, 1793 and taken from 'Edmund Burke: A Life in Caricature' by Nicholas K Robinson (Yale University Press, £30)

leaves the reader with the nagging suspicion that he regards that phrase as a contradiction in terms. Most of the quotations are about women in the Ladies' Gallery, with only two entries for the

period after the suffragettes succeeded. Yet, by anyone's standards, one of the dominant parliamentary figures of this century was Margaret Thatcher. It is impossible to understand the excessively

adversarial character of the Commons now without reference to her confrontational personality.

The chapter on "Great and Terrible Occasions" contains neither the fall of

the previous Labour government, otherwise remembered as Foot's Last Stand, nor the resignation speech of Margaret Thatcher. Yet everyone can agree that one of those events was

Great and the other Terrible, even though there may be different views as to which way round the descriptions fit.

No-one who was there on the day of Mrs Thatcher's last speech at the Despatch Box will forget how a weary, defeated woman was transformed into the familiar handbagger when she rounded on a heckler. One of the reasons she survived so long in office, despite dishing out a diet of unpopular policies, was that she could command the Commons. Conversely, one of the reasons why the present government is in terminal decline is that it is saddled with a PM who cannot even command the Commons. Yet the significance of Parliament as the crucible of our political system is lost among this encyclopaedia of gossip and trivia.

By contrast, Anthony Jay's *Oxford Dictionary of Political Quotations* provides a sharp insight into the heat of political exchange. Mrs Thatcher is vividly portrayed, in Matthew Parris's sketch of her introduction into the House of Lords, as "a big cat detained briefly in a poodle parlour, sharpening her claws on the velvet". And the best of the past is here – Tom Paine, for example, more acerbic than any modern sketch writer, reporting the failure of Burke in debate: "He rose like a rocket, he fell like a stick".

Yet the collection is also absolutely contemporary with generous entries for both Tony Blair and John Major. Iain Macleod's entries express better than any others the wit and invective of debate. How could an opponent recover from this charge: "I cannot help it if every time the Opposition are asked to name weapons they pick a boomerang?"

The success of the *Dictionary* is that most entries were intended for publication, and many are polished gems. This is indeed a companion with which to while away a late-night sitting. I would not be entirely surprised to detect some of the quotations being recycled to adorn the occasional speech. There is, after all, no greater praise a parliamentarian can offer than a threat to plagiarise.

Crash test dummies

Sean French prefers high-tech hardware to cardboard characters

Airframe by Michael Crichton, Century, £16.99

The curious thing about Michael Crichton is that he isn't much good at the things best-selling writers are supposed to be good at. He has almost no interest in story-telling or plot construction. The climactic twist in each of his last three thrillers (which all concern companies on the verge of a big deal) depends on the pivotal event being accidentally recorded: by a security camera in *Rising Sun*, by an answering machine in *Disclosure*, by a camcorder in *Airframe*. He can't write action scenes; unfortunately, he writes them anyway, and the example in the new book is both tedious and almost laughably irrelevant.

His gift is for technical and bureaucratic processes, the very things that most literary novelists skimp on, and he manages to make them exciting. This can have some peculiar results. The really thrilling, page-turning part of *Jurassic Park* was the first 150 pages or so, with all the technical details about how dinosaur DNA might be

farmed and replicated, and the interesting use of chaos theory (botched in the film) to explain why the dinosaur theme park was likely to go wrong. It was the last half of the book, in which cardboard dinosaurs pursued cardboard characters, that was barely readable.

This is why Michael Crichton's finest project is *ER*, a television show that has eliminated the traditional structure of stories and relationships and is based almost entirely on the absorbing detail of what goes on in a casualty department. A team of brilliant writers and actors added one more ingredient – living human beings, a species hitherto absent from Crichton's work.

Crichton also has a canny, often unpleasant, instinct for dark primitive fears: of genetic engineering in *Jurassic Park*; of foreigners in *Rising Sun*; of powerful women in *Disclosure*; and in *Airframe*, our fear of flying.

Even those of us who know that flying is far safer than

cycling to work will feel our pulses quicken on page two: "She clutched at her daughter, pulling her close. Now it felt like the plane was going straight down, and then suddenly it was going up, and her stomach was pressed into the seat."

Airframe begins with a mysterious incident on a passenger flight that leaves three passengers dead and the aircraft interior almost totally destroyed. The explanation must be found in a week, or the plane's manufacturer will collapse.

Contrary to some reports, this is not a thriller about air safety. It is a thriller about the perception of air safety, which is a much more interesting and complicated subject. Consequently, Crichton's leading character is not the chief of the accident investigation but Casey Singleton, the Quality Assurance rep on the Incident Review Team. She must not only find out what went wrong but deal with the irresponsible press reaction. This relatively con-

tained accident draws in the plane's manufacturer, its clients all over the world, the company's workers and the media.

Crichton's account of the relationship between them is awesomely impressive. He may describe a woman as if he has only read about one in a manual, but he is wonderfully particular about what exactly happens in an investigation, the way things work and, just as important, the way things don't work.

The weirdly gifted Crichton can make the question of document storage seem exciting and a night-time chase through an aircraft hangar seem boring. There is a brilliant three-page scene on how to be interviewed on television.

The final twist is a bit of a disappointment, especially if, like me, you have read the news item which gave Crichton the idea. But the pages of my copy have gone puffing from being read for too long in the bath: a far more telling sign of approbation.

Gross indecency

Michael Arditti convicts the '50s Establishment of vicious bigotry

Heterosexual Dictatorship by Patrick Higgins, Fourth Estate, £18.99

Anyone who has ever heard the dread words "I shall now read the minutes of the last meeting" will have reason to fear Patrick Higgins's blow-by-blow account of the workings of the Wolfenden Committee. Fortunately, these fears are soon dispelled by Higgins's account of a key, if largely symbolic, moment in the liberalisation of British sexual mores.

Higgins is concerned to challenge many myths about the committee and, in particular, about its chairman who, since his death, has been elevated to the pantheon of secular saints. Higgins paints a picture of a craven careerist, toadying to official witnesses, while barely courteous to the "criminal" Peter Wildeblood. Although in a minority, he refused to recommend a gay age of consent of 18.

Those looking for a working definition of the British Establishment could do worse than take the lawyers, doctors, churchmen, MPs, academics and one peer who made up the committee. Even the most

"liberal" peer, Goronwy Rees, wrote a series of articles in *The People* about his friend, Guy Burgess, in which he described him as a Jekyll and Hyde with "depraved tastes". In fact, it was Rees himself who exhibited the split personality, a lone voice of tolerance in committee while demanding a witch-hunt in the tabloid press.

Some of the committee's antics resemble a Whitehall farce. To safeguard their female clerical workers, they decided on the euphemisms Huntleys (homosexuals) and Palmers (prostitutes). Wolfenden opposed hearing evidence from homosexuals themselves for fear of attracting exhibitionists. He had no idea of the numbers of men involved and refused to accept the Kinsey Report.

Higgins documents the virulent homophobia of the period. True to its 19th-century model, homosexuality was regarded as a disease by liberals and reactionaries alike. The distinction lay between reformers who saw it as a mental disorder that needed

treatment and opponents who considered it an infection that would corrupt society. The church maintained its antagonism, the Bishop of Rochester even declaring that he found himself "feeling more sympathy with a curate or scout-master who has offended with a boy than with two men misbehaving together."

Press coverage, with a few exceptions, was grossly indecent. The rush for advertisers and circulation battles led to coarsening of sensibilities in both journalists and readers. Parliamentary prejudice ran rife; although, remarkably, the young Margaret Thatcher proved to be a constant supporter of reform. In the Lords, Archbishop Ramsey's admission that he knew the difference between oral and anal sex led one peer to claim that he had "turned *Hansard* into a piece of pornography."

In the second part, Higgins provides extensive documentation of 1950s homophobia. This section is less analytical – and less effective – than the first, consisting largely of short

reports of court cases, which come to resemble a relentless diet of the seamy Sunday newspapers. There are sad tales of blackmail and extortion, evidence of the lengths to which lonely men would go to obtain a little love. The behaviour of one Gloucester Cathedral curate reads like a *Le Carré* spy tale. We learn of a vicar who asked an 18-year-old to view his model railway and a farmer whose teenage boyfriend slept over because they were "crazy about milking". They, like so many others, were found guilty.

Reading this material demonstrates how radically society has changed in the past 40 years, and yet the 1950s distinction between the good homosexual (heterosexual in all but sex) and the bad homosexual (challenging, promiscuous) remains. Higgins belongs to the activist, street-theatre rather than tea-with-John-Major tendency. But anyone who considers the title unwarranted in a liberal democracy will have thought again by the end of the book.

'Far and away the best autobiography of the year' – *The Independent*

ROBERT ROBINSON MEMOIRS

Skip all that

C
CENTURY

A division of Random House

'Robinson is a superb professional broadcaster, but is also, as this entertaining and colourful volume shows, a superb writer' – *The Spectator*

'...we should cherish him as we used to cherish Evelyn Waugh' – Sheridan Morley, *The Independent*



1500 1500

A
week
in
books

In early December, a newsprint blizzard swamps us with advice on which books to buy for Christmas. Canny punters know that this sage counsel adds up to no more than log-rolling – either for bookshop chains, or to boost the egos of those hothouse flowers who fill books-of-the-year slots. Yet sceptical consumers at this time crave an antidote to hype. This column tries to fill that gap, and sweetens the unseasonal vinegar with some ideas for better buys.

It would (for example) be a crying shame if anyone who wants a guide to pop opted for the nerdy lists in *Q's Encyclopedia of Rock Stars* (Dorling Kindersley) rather than the wit and nous of *The Rough Guide to Rock* (Penguin). But sometimes hype-evasion has more to do with value than merit. There's nothing wrong with *Longitude* (Fourth Estate), Dava Sobel's tale of horological skulduggery, except that it's a longish article decked out in hard covers. The cornucopia of breakthroughs in John Carey's *Faber Book of Science* could see readers right through into 1997.

Sometimes, though, a gulf in quality hints at a deeper cultural chasm. Sir Roy Strong's overpriced *Story of Britain* (Hutchinson) delivered insular heritage history while Norman Davies's *Europe: a history* (Oxford) brought a continent to pulsating life – for a tanner less.

The familiar name also proved the unwise choice in crime fiction. Colin Dexter's *Death Is Now My Neighbour* (Macmillan) revealed its author's limits: retire Morse and hire any deft whodunnit by Reginald Hill (HarperCollins). You can also forget plodding John Grisham (*The Runaway Jury*, Century) while Scott Turow has his latest thinking-person's blockbuster on the shelves (*The Laws of Our Fathers*, Viking).

Even readers daft enough to buy books by actors need a helpful hint or two: for instance, about Alec Guinness's *My Name Escapes Me* (Hamish Hamilton) – so slight, you're amazed it doesn't float away like this-titled. However, even theses can manage *gravitas* at times: see Claire Bloom's riveting memoir, *Leaving a Doll's House* (Virago).

Bloom transforms her emotional knots into readable prose. No such concern bothers Adam Phillips, in *Monogamy* (Faber). Whatever these coy riddles teach, it isn't *Emotional Intelligence* (Bloomsbury): Daniel Goleman's humane account of why nice guys finish first.

I meant to close this Xmas blacklist with a dig at Melvyn Bragg's *Dark Ages* doornost, *Crede* (Hodder). After all, people who hanker for a long dull chronicle set in the remote past can always read *Tiny Blair's Desert Island Book*: Scott's *Krautboek*. Then I sat opposite someone who was not only immersed in Bragg's 7th-century quagmire, but 95 per cent of the way through. Soggy Yuletide thoughts returned. Better, surely, to cherish an imperfect book than none at all.

Boyd Tonkin

Dis-Consulate at Waterloo

Does Euro-integration have its roots in the Napoleonic wars? Amanda Foreman reports

How far is European integration from the road to Waterloo? This is the real question behind Alistair Horne's study of Napoleon's decline and Gregor Dallas' account of the 1815 Congress of Vienna. Their answer is – not very far at all.

Horne's *How Far From Austerlitz* (Macmillan, £20) is foremost a gripping narrative of Napoleon's downward spiral from Emperor to exile. He portrays his hero as a proud and complicated man whose far-reaching ambition blinded him to his challenges at close range.

He was born Napoléon Bonaparte in 1769, the second son of a minor Corsican family. Napoleon swiftly rose through the ranks of the French revolutionary army to become a general before he was 25. At 30, after successful campaigns in Italy and Egypt he mounted a *coup d'état* against the Directory and proclaimed himself First Consul.

By 1807, Napoleon directly ruled more than 44 million people. The French empire stretched from Hamburg to Rome, and the rest of Europe – except Britain – was either marshalled into Kingdoms under his numerous family or yoked into his Continental System. So, asks Horne, what went wrong?

His explanation lies with Napoleon's psychology. The Emperor was so dazzled by his triumph at Austerlitz that he refused to listen to Talleyrand's counsel of moderation and imposed the harsh terms on the defeated Allies. His arrogance forced France onto a footing of continuous war with the rest of Europe and made her eventual exhaustion inevitable. By 1812, when Napoleon invaded Russia, he was without friends abroad and vulnerable at home. The Russian winter decimated his 600,000 strong army and the Third Coalition easily routed the survivors.

Horne has an unrivalled ability to transform military manoeuvres into striking cinematic images. Few historians today can match the force and breadth of his vision. In so far

as his book concentrates on Napoleon it is a triumph and should be required reading for anyone interested in French history.

The only quibble is with Horne's somewhat forced parallels between Napoleon and Hitler. Of course there are superficial similarities; yes, Napoleon and Hitler were both geographical outsiders to their countries, and both invaded Russia on 22 June. But Napoleon liberated; Hitler enslaved. Napoleon marched into Russia with a single army. Hitler invaded on three fronts. He also expected help from the Finns, and when his army halted outside Moscow it was to adopt a defensive position – a tactic that benefits from winter conditions.

In his epilogue, Horne directly addresses the "British Eurosceptics of the 1990s" and advises them to accept the necessity of European integration. Europe's coalitions prove that isolated powers "are usually doomed." This contention raises two issues. First, his analogy between modern European integration with old-fashioned military co-operation is a false one. Britain has participated in European military coalitions since the Crusades. It does not follow that Eurosceptics' desire to remain outside the ERM would leave Britain "doomed."

Second, it is not clear whether the anti-Bonaparte coalitions played any meaningful part in Napoleon's defeat. The First Coalition between Russia, Prussia, Austria, Spain and Britain collapsed in 1796, leaving Britain isolated. The Second Coalition lasted for three years to 1802 and again Britain was isolated, the Third was barely more than a name before 1812, and for most of the war Britain struggled on her own with almost every port in Europe closed to her. Until Russia's triumph, the only notable successes against Napoleon were achieved by the Royal Navy and by Wellington in Spain.

Gregor Dallas's *1815: The Road to Waterloo* (Richard Cohen Books, £25) begins with the Third Coal-

ition meeting to discuss the dismemberment of Napoleon's empire at the Congress of Vienna. The French monarchy was restored. The map of Europe was brutally redrawn without regard to nationalities, and the eight signatories agreed on a system of co-operation. Although Dallas doesn't address the Eurosceptics of the 1990s personally, many of his remarks are clearly pointed in their direction. The Congress of Vienna was, in his opinion, akin to "a parliamentary assembly of the states of Europe", and remains one of the great achievements of the 19th century.

Dallas is not as elegant a writer as Horne, but he combines a mastery of detail with a vivid, almost racy style. He makes a technical subject – the diplomacy of Metternich, Talleyrand, Castlereagh, and Tsar Alexander I – extraordinarily compelling. But his enthusiasm for the Congress goes too far. He misrepresents Castlereagh as a proto-Euro-integrationist although the Foreign Secretary went to Vienna simply to preserve peace in Europe by maintaining the balance of power. As evidence that "within days" of arriving Castlereagh had "become a European", Dallas cites his hope that co-operation between Great Powers would give them the "efficiency and almost the simplicity of a single state".

Castlereagh never envisaged a united or integrated Europe. His concern was the defence of existing frontiers. Metternich and Alexander I on the other hand wanted to defend aristocratic institutions. In practice this meant intervention to crush independence movements in Europe and smother dissent at home. Britain's refusal to take an active part in these counter-revolutionary efforts soon isolated her. In any case, "co-operation" degenerated into rivalry and the Congress soon fell apart. Its lasting legacy to Europe was insurgent nationalism.

One of the participants at the Congress was Admiral Sir Sidney Smith. He had travelled at his own

expense to lobby ministers for the total abolition of the Slave Trade. His life is the subject of an outstanding biography, *A Thirst for Glory* by Tom Pocock (Aurum Press, £19.95). Smith – a true English eccentric who styled himself in Turkish costume and ate rats believing they were cleaner than pigs, never received the honours he

desired or deserved. Nelson's victory at Trafalgar cast an ineradicable shadow over his own exploits. Yet Smith was responsible for driving the French out of the Middle East. Napoleon said of him, "that man made me miss my destiny." Smith had many faults including vanity and a fatal tendency to melodrama. He was reckless to the point

of insanity. But he was also a superb tactician and the first person to recognise the potential of Robert Fulton's designs for torpedoes and submarines. Pocock claims that Smith's reputation would be much higher today if he had not been such a difficult and unpopular colleague. At last, thanks to Pocock, rehabilitation is surely round the corner.

Napoleon brooding on defeat by Paul Hippolyte Delaroche

SOOTHEBY'S

Hartebeeste, mio, with love from Dearduck

Charles Nicholl wonders whether Malcolm Lowry should have written more books and fewer letters

Sursum Corda! The Collected Letters of Malcolm Lowry, Vol II: 1946-57 edited by Sherrill E Grace, Cape, £40

A writer's collected letters are a curious monument, occupying an ill-defined space between the life and the works. They are not quite biography and not quite literature but sometimes seem like a giant, ongoing rough draft.

Malcolm Lowry's voluminous letters are fascinating in this way: rapid, specific, full of raw detail. They can seem totally unguarded, but are probably not. Lowry was an instinctive performer, and his personal letters were written with an ear half-cocked to posterity. A letter to his wife here begins "Hartebeeste mio" and ends "All Love, Dearduck": are we eavesdropping on marital intimacy, or did he know that even his pet-names would one

day be read and judged as text? Sherrill E Grace's edition of his letters, *Sursum Corda!*, now completed with this second volume, is almost literally a monument. With 1700 pages, it contains about 1000 letters and manuscripts written from 1926 to 1957. It is certainly exhaustive, and sometimes exhausting. One does not quite get "Two pints Gold Top please", but had such a note survived it would duly be here, with a brief biographical sketch of the milkman.

This isn't just the good bits: it's everything. The collection conveys a sense of huge, squandered verbal energy. As Professor Grace points out, Lowry should have written more books and fewer letters. It

also permits a growing familiarity. One is regaled by an almost palpable conversational style: fluent, allusive, button-holing, a desperate grin-fuelled geniality one step away from despair. "Sursum corda!" (lift up your hearts), was a favourite sign-off line of Lowry's, and there is something strangely uplifting about these letters, even if the uplift is more adrenal than spiritual.

On the surface this is a less picturesque period of Lowry's brief life. The first volume had a certain louché flair – Lowry the black sheep, the drifter, the literary barfly, the womaniser – and some vivid glimpses of his life in Mexico in the mid-1930s, the background of his masterpiece, *Under the Volcano*. We

begin in 1946, with *Under the Volcano* completed and about to be published. Lowry is in his mid-thirties, settled happily if tempestuously with his second wife, the former Hollywood starlet Margee Bonner. They are briefly in Haild, but most of the time at the "beach shack" they owned at Dollarton on the coast of British Columbia.

These Canadian years are full of literary struggle, financial difficulties, black-outs, injuries. Lowry found it increasingly difficult to crystallise his writing into printable form. Eddying drifts of half-formed ideas, synopses and treatment fill the letters. They will become the brooding, posthumous works like *Dark as the Grave Wherein My*

friend is Laid. We catch them here still raw, attached to his own life. He maps out the mood of the story that became *October Ferry to Gabriola*: "I want to convey that it isn't alcoholism in the true sense but a kind of death, or half life". What he is conveying is his own life, not yet transfigured into fiction.

In 1954, Lowry left the Americas for the last time. He was in bad shape physically and mentally. The following year, in London, he was hospitalised and wrote to his New York publisher, Albert Erskine: "the reaper is omnipresent but it is by no means grim for all that, in fact I spend most of my time shirtless on the cricket pitch in the dew".

He delayed the reaper on this

occasion too: this is a saga of self-destruction, but also brute strength. He died, aged 48, in a rented house in Sussex – "by misadventure" as the coroner found, by the ravages of chronic alcoholism in reality – in June 1957. His last letter is to the playwright Harvey Burt, enthusing about a recent trip to Grasmere. It ends with a plangent quotation from Wordsworth's *Prelude*: "Ye lowly cottages wherein we dwell/A ministrant of your own was ours".

This seems to be a marvellous summation of Lowry's richly errant life, among Mexican dives and Canadian shacks and all the other "lowly cottages" which he chose in preference to the comfortable mansions of his birth and class.

Out of touch at the typewriter

Geoff Dyer finds signs of stiffness in a tour of tactile pleasures

Touch by Gabriel Josipovici, Yale University Press, £19.95

Italo Calvino didn't get round to writing about touch in *Under the Jaguar Sun*, his proposed book on the five senses. Could Gabriel Josipovici's "very personal book" help make good this lack? It felt promising. That a wide range of material – Chaplin, Chardin, Chaucer – could be touched on in relatively few pages (150) suggested that this essay might well display the qualities associated with the master: tactility of ideas, the ability to render the cerebral as sensation, and feeling as thought.

Such hopes do not persist long, but there are some nice touches: an informative history of the pilgrimage as "a journey into the experience of distance itself"; a touching comparison of a photograph of the author's grandparents with Rembrandt's "The Jewish

Bride," a section on Chardin that makes one see just how weird are these paintings of extreme temporal suspense.

The most revealing chapter begins with Josipovici considering what it means to have "a good touch" at sport. The terrible thing about tennis, he observes, is the way that errors haunt you – but by dwelling on these missed chances you risk that "dread tightening of the arm" which is a premonition of defeat. This was Borg's great strength: "a point played seemed to be over and forgotten as soon as it was done, leaving him totally free to concentrate on the next one." For his part Josipovici kept playing football "long after [he] should have given up the game" and ended up wrecking his knee. He then took up Aikido where he learned that the ideal state is the

Borg-like one in which "you are both utterly relaxed and utterly concentrated." To Western minds this might appear contradictory but Josipovici is adamant that this is exactly how one feels when swimming, running or "writing well."

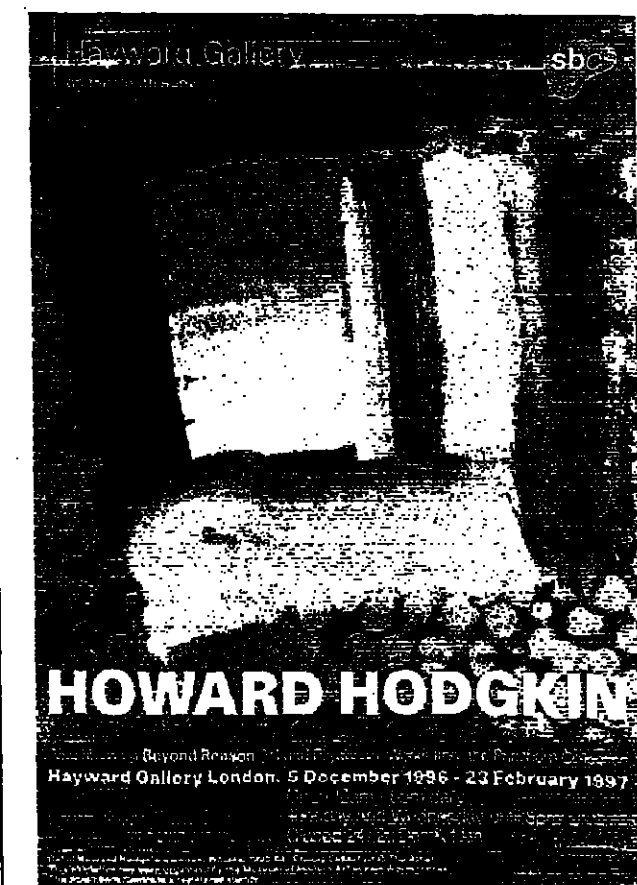
And with that – precisely because he is so right – he hobbles himself. For Josipovici's distinguishing characteristic as a writer is that he is so uptight. Looking at that photo of his grandparents, he notes their "slight stiffness" before the camera, but they are supple as yogi compared with their grandson. His prose is not stiff. It's petrified. Even in his more relaxed moments he lacks what he terms "kinetic melody." Compared with Camus's lyrical evocations of swimming in Algeria, Josipovici's meditation on the pleasure of

doing so in Egypt is chlorinated, wheezing. His account of walking on the South Downs ("when there is only a mild breeze blowing, when there is springy turf under foot") is similarly stifling.

There is a pompous edge, too, to much of the commentary, signalled by his fondness for the all-knowing "of course" ("Morandi of course is the great exception"). Part of the reason for this is that Josipovici is an academic, and the pipe-smoke staleness of the lecture hall is never far away. It is amazing that so much time in so short a book is spent holding forth to students. Genius, he observes at one point, is "nothing more than the ability to push an insight to its limits and not be deflected either by laziness or conventional wisdom." That's as maybe, but Josipovici's insights

are far too limited and are not pushed anything like far enough to qualify.

In a way common among devotees of ossified experimentalism, he is also deeply conventional. He is one of those writers for whom the act of writing reaches an apotheosis of purity only when he types out the sentence. "I am writing." On this occasion – after a bit of verbal foreplay in the Prologue – he holds out until the penultimate chapter before succumbing to what might be termed the *petite mort de l'écriture*: "Over my typewriter, a little more upright. My hand moves over the page. My fingers hit the keys. I am writing." Aah! In the context of a book about touch, what can one say except that it is numb and numbing?





Paperbacks

By Christopher Hirst and Lucasta Miller

The Day Before Yesterday: Five Million Years of Human History by Colin Tudge (Pimlico, £9.99) Frightening and fascinating in equal measure, this beautifully written mix of eco-history and geopolitics argues that our leaders should be taking a very long view of the future of our environment – indeed, that one million years is not an unreasonable unit of political time. It also shows how swiftly and irreversibly global change can take effect, pointing out that if CFCs had been invented in the *laissez-faire* epoch of Victorian industrialism, the end of the world would today be unquestionably nigh.

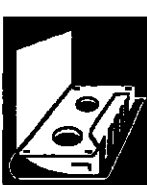
Dreams of Love and Modest Glory by Joan Lingard (Mandarin, £6.99) Big historical novel, taking in the Russian Revolution, two world wars and the collapse of Communism. It opens in 1913 with the double wedding of twin sisters from Aberdeen. One marries a tsarist count, the other a Latvian intellectual, and their love stories open out into a family saga, marked by secrets and lies, spanning three generations. This is a good, effortless read, instantly involving and unpretentious.

Byzantium: The Decline and Fall by John Julius Norwich (Penguin, £9.99) Anyone seeking a reading project this Christmas will not do better than Lord Norwich's acclaimed trilogy about Byzantium. This dazzling conclusion (from

Easter 1081 to 29th May 1453) maintains the same scorching pace and penchant for intriguing detail as the first two volumes (*Byzantium: The Early Centuries* and *Byzantium: The Apogee* republished at £9.99 each).

The People of Providence by Tony Parker (Eland, £9.99) A sequence of 49 in-depth interviews from a down-at-heel London housing estate may seem an unusual choice by a publisher who specialises in travel books. But this is an extraordinary work. Parker, who died this year, spent five years on the project. First published in 1983, it merits comparison with Mayhew's *London Labour* and the *London Poor* for depth and clear-eyed sympathy.

The Plastic Tomato Cutter by Michael Curtin (Fourth Estate, £6.99) In alternate chapters, two narrators describe how the Sixties transformed a small Irish community. One is Mr Yendall, the martinet of a fusty gents' outfitters. The other is Tim Harding, an over-educated snooker champ who ekes a living out of Fagend, his one-man agency for the treatment of nicotine addicts. Yendall's world is turned upside-down by long-haired pop groups and the disappearance of the half-crown. Harding has a more serious problem: consanguinity. He falls for a beauty who turns out to be his sister. Curtin's inventive, beguiling imbrolio is a delight from start to finish.



Books you listen to

Humour is the best-selling category of audio books. *Talkies Best Comedy Award* went to *The Long Johns* (Laughing Stock, c 1hr, £5.99), John Bird and John Fortune's brilliant mock interviews satirising political cynicism and expediency from the Rory Bremner Show. *Blackadder's Christmas Carol* (BBC, c 1hr, £5.99) turns Dickens's story on its head with predictably hilarious results.

Christina Hardyment

Powers of intelligence

Donald Cameron Watt welcomes a new generation of spy-watchers

In six new books on spying and the gathering of intelligence there are no real duds, despite the efforts of the publishers to misrepresent Leslie Collitt's biography of Marcus Wolf, *Spymaster*, the real life of Karl's moles and the East German Secret Police (Robson £16.95). In fact, Wolf headed the GDR's Foreign Intelligence Service, not its secret police. Among the others, Bradley Smith's *Sharing Secrets with Stalin* (University of Kansas Press, £27.95) is outstanding: a dyed-in-the-wool professional study of the intelligence aspects of the uneasy co-operation between the Big Three against Hitler. The rest include one biography, one fascinating account of a uniformed British intelligence-gathering agency, now defunct; and three different studies of other British agencies: the Secret Intelligence Service, the Government Codes and Ciphers Service and the Security Service, now acknowledged – rather than defined – by Act of Parliament.

It would be nice to think that all this marks the end of the persistent breach of the Official Secrets Act by a handful of writers echoing the whinges of disaffected anonymous secret servants, which has for so long passed as the record of British intelligence. A vain hope, I fear. But after Mark Urban's impressive catalogue of the great and the good among his informants in *UK Eyes Alpha* (Faber, £16.99), Michael Smith's trawling of the Public Record Office, *New Cloak, Old Dagger* (Gollancz, £20) and Michael Herman's serious, officially encouraged, efforts to provide the intelligence services with a theoretical underpinning, *Intelligence Power in Peace and War* (Cambridge, £50, £16.95), the whinge-echoers should be the more easily recognisable.

Bradley Smith's previous study of Anglo-American wartime intelligence co-operation has already made the continuation of that co-operation a cliché of studies of the "Special Relationship". His gift for disinterring from the public records in London and Washington what the censors fondly believe to be fathom-deep in their most secret



Marcus Wolf (centre, between his father and brother, Friedrich): "East German desk warrior"

repositories is legendary. *Sharing Secrets with Stalin* shows how the professional intelligencers of the Big Three coped with the conflict between their ideological suspicions of each other and their need for victory, and how the degree of exchange fluctuated as the military successes of each enhanced their standing in the eyes of their opponents, makes this a yardstick for the closeness of the East-West alliance. The British came off very badly. Smith's demonstration that even after Hiroshima, the US went on

supplying the Russians with top-level military intelligence on Japan makes nonsense of the contention that Hiroshima was the first shot in the Cold War.

In *Beyond the Front Line* (HarperCollins, £20), Tony Geraghty – ex-para and specialist in SAS derring-do – writes of *Braxxis*, the former British Military Liaison Group with Soviet forces in East Germany. Their concentration on Soviet troop movements and military installations led to violent, potentially lethal, confrontations with Soviet or GDR security forces.

Serving only two-year tours of duty, they were bold, enterprising and unconventional. They also served the cause of peace by allaying fears of Soviet military build-ups and surprise attacks.

Leslie Collitt's title is an unnecessary nonsense. Unlike Karl, Smiley's opponent in Le Carré's televised trilogy, Marcus Wolf was an East German desk warrior, Moscow-trained and Moscow-appointed to head East German foreign intelligence. Collitt's sources are Stasi files and Wolf himself. Under him, East German intelligence agents

seduced their way into the heart of West German politics. Collitt's study is the most comprehensive so far available in English.

The journalists Mark Urban and Michael Smith complement each other. Urban's *UK Eyes Alpha* is compulsive reading on the Whitehall in-fighting between the secret services and Mrs Thatcher's mania for control. In *New Cloak, Old Dagger*, Smith is particularly good on Northern Ireland. Between them they lay many of the myths perpetuated by the literary buckets that catch dissent leaks. Afficionados will need, to read both. Smith weakens his own solid research with some very dodgy historical sources, and Urban apparently believes his sources told him everything – a dangerous ploy in writing intelligence history. He has also talked to too many ex-CIA US nationalists whose *Who-needs-you-old-boy* Anglophobia has made him overly pessimistic about the future.

Common to these approaches is an inability to distinguish between military and political intelligence about other countries. By contrast with the other great powers in the first half of this century, Britain concentrated on the former as well as the latter. It made the security agencies arms of the Foreign Office, not the forces or the police. This raises the question of how much secret intelligence really counts in the overall political assessment of the external world.

It is to this that Michael Herman (among much else) directs himself. His indispensable *Intelligence Power in Peace and War* is based on the widest of reading, which he summarises with skill and clarity. What is available, however, is largely generated by American views of the US-Soviet confrontation. None of this is very helpful to the adaptation of intelligence work to the problems of a world still full of threats to Britain's interests. As our effective power dwindles, the need for reliable assessment and for political and public confidence in it increases. Secret intelligence may only constitute ten per cent of the total picture ten per cent of the time, as a hard-bitten ex-diplomat recently said. But its neglect will cost Britain treasure, let alone lives.

A slave to liberal passions

Godfrey Hodgson dethrones a Founding Father

The Long Affair: Thomas Jefferson and the French Revolution by Conor Cruise O'Brien, Sinclair-Stevenson, £25

Three monuments dominate the Mall in Washington, celebrating the trinity of the American civil religion. A tall obelisk commemorates George Washington, father of American independence. A porticoed temple celebrates Lincoln, the renewer of the covenant. And a dome, reflected in the Tidal Basin, glorifies Thomas Jefferson, near-holy spirit of the American ideology.

Inside the Jefferson memorial, a number of texts were inscribed, including three about slavery: "I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just, that his justice cannot sleep forever. Commerce between master and slave is despotism. Nothing is more certainly written in the book of fate than that these people are to be free." The last sentence, taken from Jefferson's *Autobiography*, is incomplete. It continues, as Conor Cruise O'Brien points out, to state that "Nor is it less certain that the two races, equally free, cannot live in the same government. Native habit, opinion has drawn indelible lines of distinction between them."

The suppression of the second half is only a detail in the long campaign to conceal the awkward fact that the imperishable author of the ringing declaration that all men were created equal was not only a slave-owner but also a racist. Nor can this be brushed aside with the defence that he only reflected the prejudices of his time. George Washington did not share Jefferson's racism. Jefferson believed, as Washington did not, that there was no future for black people in the United States and he therefore advocated that freed slaves should be sent "back where they came from", in the phrase beloved of modern British racists.

The evidence O'Brien deploys has been painstakingly accumulated by a whole younger generation of American historians. It includes



Thomas Jefferson: "hypocritical" HULTON GETTY

the fact that Jefferson tried to write into the laws of Virginia two proposals that were too strong even for his fellow slave-owners. One would have made it illegal for free Negroes to enter the state, or to stay there once freed. The other would have removed from "the protection of the laws" any white woman who bore a black man's child: an invitation to lynching.

Thanks to earlier southern historians, it is widely believed that Jefferson, although a slave-owner, wanted to abolish slavery. He did condemn slavery, and no doubt he hated it, if only because of the contradiction between his ideology of liberty and the reality of his life. But he went to great lengths to recapture and punish his own runaways.

Unlike Washington, he did not free his own slaves in his will, with the exception of four who were probably his own children. O'Brien accepts that we shall not know for certain whether Jefferson was the father of Beverley, Harriet, Madison and Estlin Hemings, the children of his servant Sally Hemings, until DNA testing has been carried out on their remains. The guardians of the Jefferson cult have always poured scorn

on the tale that Sally was Jefferson's mistress. But what is not in doubt is that Sally was the half-sister of Jefferson's own wife, daughter of a liaison between Martha Jefferson's father and a slave.

It is not the chief purpose of O'Brien's book to portray Jefferson as a racist or a hypocrite. Its theme is his role as the principal champion in America of the French Revolution. Although generations of Jeffersonians have portrayed their hero as a pillar of an American democratic tradition far removed from the ferocity of Robespierre, O'Brien notes that Jefferson continued to defend the atrocities in France. After the king's execution, Jefferson as Secretary of State wrote to his *chargé d'affaires* in Paris that "were there but an Adam and an Eve left in every country, and left free, it would be better than as it now is."

Not until long after the Terror did Jefferson condemn the Revolution. And then, suggests O'Brien, one significant factor was Robespierre's proposal, in response to the slave rebellion in Haiti, to emancipate the slaves in all French and British colonies.

"How is it", Dr Johnson asked, "that we hear the loud-est yelps for liberty from the

drivers of negroes?" The remark has usually been dismissed as a cheap shot from a resentful Tory. But O'Brien suggests there may indeed have been a connection between the cult of Liberty in Virginia and slavery. Liberty to white Virginians included the liberty to own slaves.

Nothing can now change the fact, he believes, that the US will increasingly be a multi-racial society. The mainstream will therefore soon eject Jefferson from the American trinity. He will be left to that minority who defend white supremacy and States' Rights. Both suspects in the Oklahoma City bombing claimed him as an inspiration. Timothy McVeigh, when arrested, was wearing a T-shirt inscribed "The tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants."

The traditional view of Jefferson is that he was a passionate advocate of liberty for all trapped in the position of owning slaves. O'Brien brings to Jefferson his suspicion of the harm done by revolutionary rhetoric in England and his sympathy for Edmund Burke's negative view of the French Revolution. Making allowance for that, he has put the torch of his persuasive gifts to the evidence heaped up by revisionist historians. Together they have scorched the marble statesman of the Tidal Basin. The questions about Jefferson's ideological legacy raise questions about the nature of US civil religion and the extent to which it extends its offer of equality to those who are not white North Americans.

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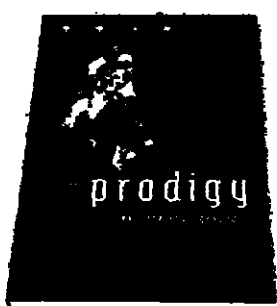
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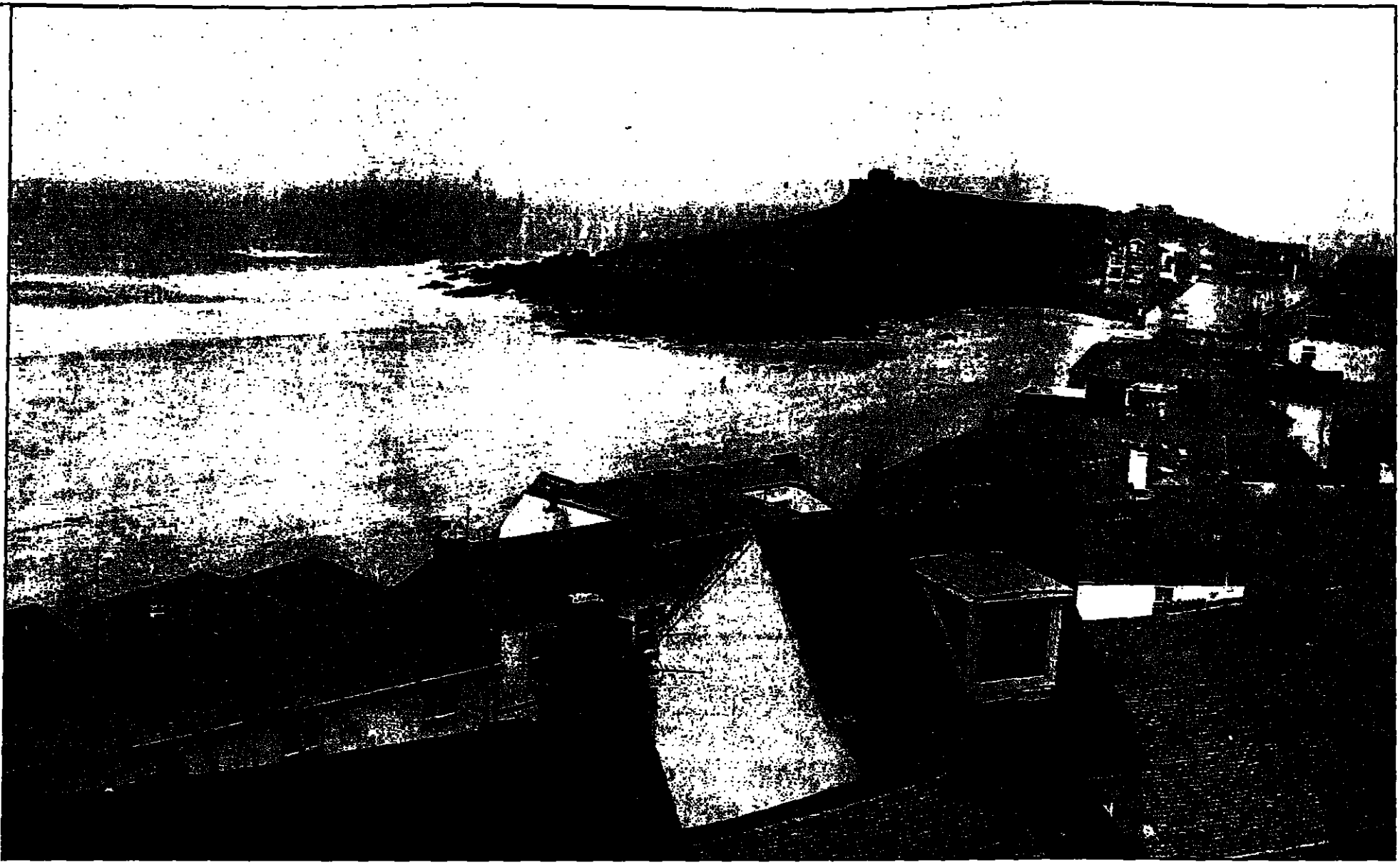
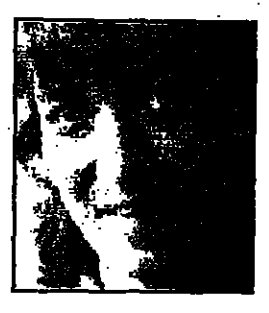
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How many were in St Ives?

Harriet O'Brien, Travel Writer of the Year, enjoys the quiet of Cornwall out of season



The view from the Tate Gallery café of Porthmeor beach, one of the windiest and most dramatic parts of St Ives

PHOTOGRAPH: HARRIET O'BRIEN

It was the pig that did it. And a pot. Yet when I go back to St Ives next December it won't be only because of them. Big seas, big winds, a luminous quality of light, and art – living, as well as hung on walls – are all part of the equation. Forget sunshine, sandcastles and ice-cream on the beach; Cornwall out of season is inspiring, exhilarating – and half empty.

It was doubtless due to the lack of visitors that the pig was so pleased to see us. We came across her as we were walking over the cliffs beyond St Ives last week. Emitting small squeals of delight, she squelched hastily across her muddy enclosure to greet us, and to be admired. Her pink snout whiffed against the wire fence as she presented her ears to be scratched. Great waves pounded the rocks below us, and she seemed to capture the spirit of the place: an open friendliness in total contrast to the wildness of the landscape and the elements.

At this time of year there is scope for the people (as well as the animals) of St Ives to stop and chat. An explanation from a shopkeeper about the finer points of Cornish honey might meander gently on to some considered advice as to where to see the most dramatic cliff scenery, then take a sharp right angle and develop into a discussion about local opinion of the Tate Gallery. This opened in St Ives in June 1993 and, rather than getting a predicted 70,000 visitors a year, has been averaged 200,000. The Tate, understandably, is a popular topic. "Oh, it's been fairly good for business," the honey man remarked in quiet understatement. "It attracts a steady stream of visitors even at times like this when St Ives would otherwise be pretty much closed down. And yes, most of us do like it. Very much. But then there are so many artists here anyway."

It was a local potter who made my pot: a tall earthenware vase, its glaze subtly shot through with the mellow colours of the cliffs in changing light. Reminiscent,

I couldn't help grandly thinking, of the works of Bernard Leach. It sat in a shop window alongside pictures by resident painters, and little bins of knick-knackery: glass ornaments of cute cats, and quaint pottery figures. Like St Ives itself, which manages to cater for both a summer beach brigade and an influx of gallery-goers, there was something for everyone.

To see many of the paintings, ceramics and sculptures that transformed the little harbour town from a sleepy fishing village into a significant art centre, you go to the Tate. This is not simply an ersatz arm of the modern art gallery in London. The exhibits here, many of them important works, have strong associations with the area: ceramics by Bernard Leach and his Japanese colleague Shoji Hamada; wonderfully lit sculpture by Barbara Hepworth; and, of course, works by Ben Nicholson, Christopher Wood and Alfred Wallis. The now-legendary meeting between Nicholson, Wood and Wallis is considered to have been the turning-point in the artistic fortunes of St Ives. (What, one wonders, did old sailor Wallis make of Nicholson and Wood when, on that famous visit to St Ives in August 1928, the young artists walked straight into his home, exclaiming about Wallis's naive paintings, having seen them by chance through the open door?) A special exhibition of Wood's works from 1923 to 1930 – when the artist was, bizarrely, killed by a train in Salisbury – is currently on display. Yet there's more to the Tate than the art on show. For a start, it's got one of the best cafés in town. Sipping a cappuccino from the vantage point here, you look down over the steep, cobbled alleyways of St Ives, and gaze over the biggedy-piggledy mix of roofs. The building, in fact, holds as many surprises as the exhibits. Set opposite Porthmeor Beach, one of the windiest parts of the little town, it absorbs much of the mesmerising play of light from the sea scenery. Such reflections have the

strange, and slightly unnerving, effect of making everything seem like an exhibit, down to the cakes in the café and the other visitors. And, despite the quality of the art on the walls and in glass cases, you can't help feeling that one of the finest shows in the Tate is the view from the enormous picture window in the Long Gallery, which frames the beach scene beyond.

The sea and wind were in fine form on the day we were there. From the warmth of the gallery we watched a group of surfers scooting over the waves and enjoying some of the best (albeit chilly) conditions of the sport. A kite flier, though, provided the most spectacular performance. He caught the wind superbly. Gripping his strings tightly, he was sent skidding across the sand as his canopy leapt and ducked excitedly. Occasionally the force of it all took him right off the ground. It was as if he was lifted up by his own exhilaration.

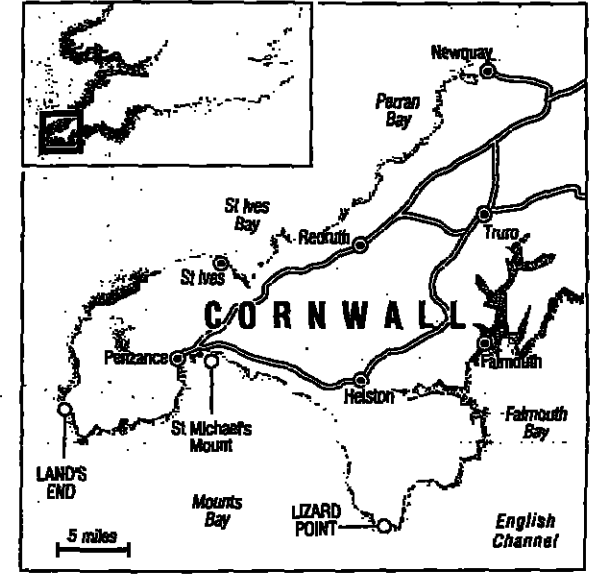
Such displays of energy are a far cry from the small museum of Barbara Hepworth's sculpture, set in the artist's former home, where she died in a fire in her studio in 1975. There's an appropriately static quality here, as if time stopped then. In the little garden, also created by Hepworth, you walk among large bronzes of differing shapes at every angle, sitting stolidly alongside exotic plants and foliage. A small path leads to her workshop; here smocks hang by the door and large blocks of stone still wait to be transformed.

You start to understand why Hepworth created her strange images when you walk along the cliffs west of St Ives. The area just around from Land's End is particularly rich in extraordinary formations of granite boulders that seem impossibly perched above sheer drops. To get there you have to walk through the Land's End complex. From the promotional literature and several critical reports, I had expected this would be something of a theme park gnomery. And

Cornish essentials

What to see: The Tate (01736 796226) is open 11am-5pm Tuesday-Sunday. Adults £3, concessions £1.50, under 16s free when accompanied by an adult. The Christopher Wood exhibition runs until 20 April 1997. Barbara Hepworth's house (01736 796226) is open at the same time as the Tate. Adults £2, concessions £1.50, under-16s free when accompanied by an adult. Joint ticket with the Tate £4.50. Land's End is open daily from 10am until sunset (01736 871501). Several shops and a few attractions – the Last Labyrinth, the Spirit of Cornwall, and Greb Farm – are open during the winter. Entrance to the complex and the

shows: adults £3 (including car parking), children £1, car parking only, £2. **Where to shop:** The Wills Lane Gallery on Wills Lane (01736 796297) has an impressive collection for serious buyers. The New Craftsman, 24 Fore Street (01736 795652), has a more eclectic mix of good paintings and pottery. **Who to ask:** The St Ives tourist office (01736 796297). The staff can supply details of buses to Land's End and other places beyond town. **Where to stay:** St Ives is saturated with B&Bs. For details of those remaining open during the winter, contact the local tourist office (see above). Harriet O'Brien paid £18 per night at the Grey Mullet Guest House, 2



Bunkers Hill, in the centre of the town (01735 796635). **Where to eat:** Many restaurants are closed during the winter, but the Sloop Inn – dating from

1312 – on the harbour serves locally caught fish and other dishes provided you order before 8.30pm. Excellent fresh fish is also on offer at Peppers Pizzeria, 22 Fore Street.

Frequent flyer? Prepare for delays

For the past year I have been tracking assiduously the punctuality of every flight I have taken. This may strike you as a singularly sad way to spend one's time, but the results confirm what many frequent travellers suspect – that the chances are more likely than not that your flight will be delayed. Of nearly 50 flights, two-thirds were delayed by anything from five minutes to three hours.

The most consistently tardy carrier is British Airways, with an average delay of 20 minutes, but this reflects the fact that I have used it more than any other – and that BA has to cope with the two crowded home bases of Heathrow and Gatwick.

The survey begins with a 45-minute delay on a BA flight from Heathrow to Harare (ascribed to "missing passengers") and ends with a 15-minute late Chicago to Heathrow hop on American Airlines ("a few last-minute bags").

In between, explanations for delays have ranged from the catch-all "operational



difficulties" to the hardly more informative cause given bluntly by a Delta pilot between Atlanta and Orlando: "weather". In some ways it has been a good year; unlike the last couple, all the planes have landed at roughly the right airport on approximately the right day. There was just one aborted landing (on Cyprus Turkish Airlines at Antalya) and one curtailed take-off (a Caledonian Airways TriStar from Manchester to Mombasa). This flight turned out to be the most delayed of all, reaching Kenya three hours late. But this was in a summer when some passengers experienced delays of more than two

days – my colleague Wendy Berliner spent 53 hours in Orlando failing to travel with Airtours International to Gatwick. And whenever you, like me, are tempted to grumble about a modest delay, it is well worth remembering that we are extraordinarily privileged to be able to undertake relatively fast, relatively comfortable travel to the ends of the earth for implausibly low fares.

Some people, of course, are more privileged than others – notably those in the premium cabin. I am sorry to report that the "upgrade tie" that I carry habitually, and put on just before check-in, in the hope of a seat in business class, has worked just once.

Air 2000 does not appear in my survey, but it would feature high in any list of soon-to-be-outdated names. Fortunately, readers have responded generously to their suggestions for a new name for the charter carrier to take it into the new millennium. A convoy of suggestions

as to what the airline could call itself once the year 2000 is over has been touching down over the past fortnight. Mr E Wright of Fleetwood recommends Millenair, while Mike Marshall of Bromsgrove has a name that will be valid for just 12 months – Air in 2000.

Peter Mair of London notes that Air 2000 offers tall people extra legroom, and offers "Air 2001 – a Leg Space Odyssey". Mr Mair also says that another charter airline, Monarch, will book seats with extra space to tall travellers without the need to supply a doctor's letter, as required by Air 2000. "To achieve this, as soon as one is booked on a Monarch flight, phone 01582..."

The responsibility for this number being incomplete is mine, not Mr Mair's. When I tried the number he suggested, the airline confirmed that it will do its best to assign an emergency exit row to tall travellers – but refused me permission to publish the number you need to call to request assistance. It seems that

Monarch provides a useful service, but prefers its customers not to know about it.

Meanwhile, perhaps Air 2000 will grant an upgrade, or at least extra legroom, to those whose suggestions appear above.

As MPs disperse from Westminster for the last Christmas holiday of this parliament, some of them will be looking forward to foreign visits as part of a Commons select committee. Writing in *Travel Weekly*, the Labour MP Nigel Griffiths reveals that members of the Defence Select Committee have bagged Ankara, Athens, Brussels, Gibraltar, Naples, New York, Paris and Washington DC. They did rather better than the Catering Committee: "Its one exotic trip consisted of a visit to British Rail's on-board services training school in Euston". One committee member who misheard news of the impending trip spent some time fondly anticipating a trip to Houston, Texas.

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So who will sponsor the snow?

Stephen Wood on the arcane and inventive system that enriches - and cheapens - skiing

According to a survey of high earners in sport, published last week by *Total Sport* magazine, the racing driver Damon Hill was paid £7m this year. Anyone who has watched Grands Prix on television will have an idea where that sort of money comes from. This year, his car was a 200mph billboard for Rothmans cigarettes and Sanyo audio, among other products; previously, it has sold Labatt's beer, Canon cameras and Sega video games.

Motor racing is one of those sports that sponsors love. Unlike, say, World Cup football, where the advertising hoardings are just part of the background scenery, Grand Prix TV coverage focuses permanently on the promotional vehicles themselves, beaming sponsors' logos into hundreds of millions of homes around the world.

Why am I telling you all this in a skiing column? Because World Cup ski racing offers a similar sponsorship potential. But when you watch NBC's *Ski Sunday*, which returns for a new season at 5:00pm tomorrow, you will struggle to see the sort of big brand names that adorn racing cars. There is plenty to read on the competitors' ski suits, skis and poles, even their pogie straps. (Ignore the racing bibs, which belong to the event sponsors.) But all the names, with few exceptions, are those of skiwear and ski equipment manufacturers. Ski racing is still run in the traditional way, by national skiing federations, with rules designed to prevent non-ski-industry sponsors from cheapening, and enriching, the sport.

When Martin Bell retired last year, he was the most successful British men's skier of recent times. But in his final two years of competition, when the British team was poorly sponsored, he didn't command a big salary: he made a loss. Like the rest of us, he paid to go skiing. So at the age of 31, he took his first nine-to-five job, as ski consultant to the *Daily Mail* Ski Magazine, to pay off his debts. The sponsorship rules ensure that even the top racers, says Bell, earn sums which are paltry in comparison with other sports: he doubts that Albert Tomba—a winner of Olympic golds, World Championships and World Cups and a big star in Italy—makes more than a million dollars a year.

The "Rules and Precisions" of the



Albert Tomba: big in Italy, but a low earner compared to other sports stars

International Ski Federation (FIS) on commercial markings comprise a long list of "don'ts", and a dense specification of sites and measurements for permitted displays. The rules proceed from the assumption that manufacturers should be allowed to draw attention to the equipment they have supplied to competitors. The fact that the brand name must go on the equipment itself has had curious consequences – such

as the case of the ski-wax maker which went into the poggie business.

Martin Bell explains: "Briko was a slax wax company which supplied the Italian team. They got some good results with the wax—but Briko couldn't get much publicity out of its success". A name on a wax package gets no TV exposure, "so Briko started making goggles. They are a fairly cheap item—but a google strap is very visible on

TV". This seemed to open up the possibility of, say, Coca-Cola having a few pairs of goggles made up for competitors with its logo on the strap—but the International Ski Federation's article 211.2.3 closed that loophole by requiring that the straps be "as on products sold to the public".

The Federation does, however, permit a tightly controlled display of non-ski-industry brand names, where the national

ski federations have done sponsorship deals. The British Ski Federation (BSF) has allowed its team members to have a "personal headband sponsor". Its illustration specifies "one logo, max size 50 sq cm, positioned at front, above national emblem". And having found no overall team sponsor, the BSF has also released to the skiers its "Badge 4" site on the ski outfit, also of 50 sq cm. Unfortunately,

only one, Martin Bell's younger brother Graham, has found a sponsor. If you see his name on the caption on *Ski Sunday* tomorrow you may also, says the BSF's Fiona McLean, be able to make out the names of Nielson Holidays (personal headband sponsor) and Paul Mitchell hair care products (Badge 4).

Later in the *Ski Sunday* season you could also see the name of a Slovenian kitchen supplier flying across the screen. A curious wrinkle in the FIS rules—of which the Slovenian national team, among others, has taken full advantage—permits Nordic ski-jumpers to carry the names of non-ski industry sponsors on their skis.

Why do competitive skiers still allow national federations and national amateur status to restrict their earnings? Other sports, notably golf and tennis, have broken free of such controls, and World Cup skiing, with its extensive TV coverage and star names (on the Continent, if not in Britain), clearly has the potential to do the same. "I often wonder why it hasn't happened, and I can't put my finger on it," says Martin Bell. "But top skiers tend to be young, and often come from small mountain villages. So they don't tend to be wise in the ways of the world. Also, they come from diverse cultures and speak different languages, which makes it difficult for them to band together."

The normal process of revolution against sporting authorities involves the creation of a rival, more commercially oriented circuit. There were rumours that this might happen in the mid-Eighties; but says Bell, "the racers were sort of bought off by the FIS when it introduced personal headband sponsorship. And anyway, the competitive skiing season is too short to support two circuits: the old, and a new breakaway rival. It lasts only from the end of November to the end of March, so there just aren't enough weekends available." And during peak holiday times, the resort area's too keen to host events.

If some old sporting traditions live on, however, others fade away. You still won't see big-money sponsors' logos on *Ski Sunday*, but neither will you hear the voice of the commentator David Vine. After 17 years on the programme, he has retired. It won't be the same without him chanting his mantra about the tuck position.

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In Brno, they now ask your opinion ...

Max Wooldridge revisits the Czechs' second city

"You know that Skoda in English means 'a pity'?" my translator friend Romana inquired over a dinner of *smazany syr* (fried cheese in bread-crumbs).

It was news to me, but it made sense of an incident I had seen earlier while I was walking to Liberty Square (Namesti Svobody), Brno's main square. A delivery van had driven into the back of a Skoda, knocking the car's bumper off. The driver got out, shrugged his shoulders and simply placed the fender in his boot, accepting the damage as inevitable. No insurance details were exchanged; both drivers just shook hands and departed.

If Prague is the Czech Republic's favourite child, Brno (pronounced *br-no*, like a reaction to a chilly wind – not Bruno as in boxer Frank) is its silent cousin. The city's 650th anniversary in 1993 went largely unnoticed.

Despite its location in the centre of Europe (half way between Budapest and Prague, and close to both Bratislava and Vienna), little is known about the Czech Republic's second city other than that it is the birthplace of the novelist Milan Kundera and the Bren gun. The Second World War machine gun was first manufactured in Brno, before production moved to Enfield.

When it comes to architecture, Brno beats Prague hands down, with its weird and wonderful "House of the Four Ninies" (U Ctyr Mamlasu), in the triangular Liberty Square, built at the turn of the century by a rich Jewish industrialist. The "Ninies" are four massive stone figures with agonised expressions who support the building on their shoulders.

I found more pained looks on the faces of Capuchin monks, whose remains are displayed in the crypt of Brno's 17th-century monastery, a real theatre of the macabre, nearby in Namesti Kapucinske. They are joined by the bodies of local burghers and noblemen, preserved by an ingenious ventilation system.

One of the monks was buried alive; when his coffin was opened he was discovered lying in a different position to when he was laid to rest. (And look out for chandeliers made of human bones.)

The first time that I visited Brno was in November 1989, during the demonstrations that led to the Velvet Revolution. I joined thousands of students in Liberty Square; we anxiously stuffed newspapers down our backs in case the police beat us. It was then that I met Petr, a local English teacher. Now, he runs his own English language school and promotes classical music concerts for touring foreign orchestras. When we met again in a hotel lobby he was busy explaining to an American producer why his concert posters had been delayed. "The printers are not capitalistic yet. They need two weeks."

Getting there

There are no direct flights between the UK and Brno. The closest international gateway is Prague, which has daily services from Heathrow on British Airways (0345 222111), British Midland (0345 554554), or CSA Czech Airlines (0171-255 1898) – which also operates from Stansted. In descending order, the lowest return fares for each airline (including tax) are as follows, applicable for passengers travelling in January:

British Airways' lowest World Offer fare of £199.90 must be booked by 18 December.

British Midland charges £180.90 for a ticket, which must be booked at least a day before travelling.

CSA charges the same amount for travellers departing from Heathrow, but flights from Stansted come out £15 cheaper, at £165.90.

A bus from Victoria coach station in London to Florenc bus station in Prague costs £95 return (including free soft drinks) and takes about 20 hours, through Kingscourt Express (0181-673 7500).

From Prague, a connecting bus or train to Brno takes around three hours and costs about £10 each way.

Staying there

Rates quoted for the following hotels are for a night in a double room, including breakfast. Hotel Avion, Ceska 20 (00 42 5 42 21 50 16): £37 or £28 – the lower price is for rooms with a shower but no toilet. Hotel Pegas, Jakubská 4 (00 42 5 42 21 01 04): £40. Hotel Slovan, Lidická 23 (00 42 5 41 32 12 07): £36.

Further information

Contact the Czech Centre, 95 Great Portland Street, London W1N 5RA (0171-291 9924). Open 9.30am–5pm from Monday to Friday. Nearest tube station: Oxford Circus.

The tourist office in Brno is located at Behoušská 3, but its telephone number (00 42 5 42 21 10 89, extension 90) never seems to get an answer.

Later, we dined at the U Pinkasu beer hall off Ceska, Brno's main shopping street. There were no tables free so we sat amongst cheerful Czechs, sipping glasses of golden beer and feasting on fattening food such as *svickova* (beef in cream sauce) and *knedliky* (dumplings). On the next table, two middle-aged women with clashing hair tints refused to let two men share their table with them. I asked Petr what was going on. "They didn't like the way the men asked

if they could sit down," he explained.

Was Brno, I wondered, a city of unpleasantly brusque people? I was reassured to some extent when I learnt that the twisted spire above the Gothic portal of the 13th-century Old Town Hall (Staré Radnice) was not the result of vandalism by Lada louts. More like revenge wreaked by the 16th-century sculptor Anton Pilgram: when the council didn't pay him as much as he'd hoped, he instructed his stone-cutters to bend the tallest spire. It remains twisted to this day, aptly located above the statue of justice.

Churches, it seems, are a focal point for local – and lasting – expression. At the top of St James Church in Jakubské Namesti is "Nehanba" (the shameless one), a manikin who exposes his bottom from the church tower's southern window. The manikin is believed to have been built as an eloquent message to a rival church south of the city.

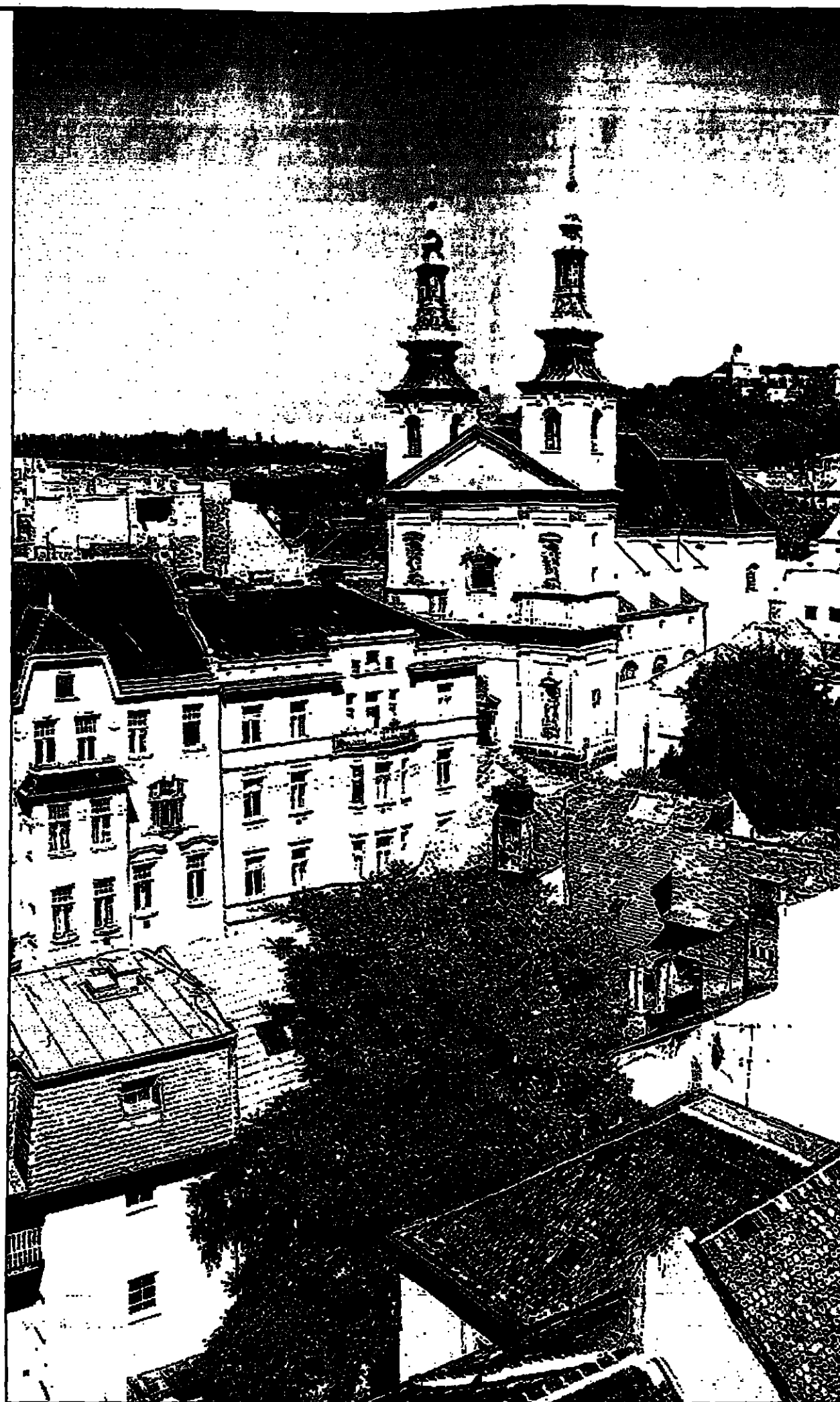
Perhaps its desired target was the Cathedral of Saints Peter and Paul on Petrov Hill, with imposing twin spires reminiscent of the *Thunderbirds* rocket. For the last 350 years, its bells have rung at midday an hour early. In 1645, a crafty bishop rang the cathedral bells for noon at 11am, after a Swedish General besieging the city declared that he would leave if his troops hadn't captured the place by midday.

Other imagery abounds. Brno's best known attraction is the Brno Dragon, which hangs in the entrance of the town hall. But the legendary dragon, reputedly killed by a gallant knight after it had terrorised the city, is more likely to be a stuffed Amazonian alligator brought home by a nobleman. Also of the stuff of legend is the Brno Wheel, said to have been made in 1636 by a cocksure carpenter 40km away in Lednice, southern Moravia. He chopped a tree down, made a wheel and rolled it to Brno all in one day. What a guy – but quite what he was trying to prove, no one knows.

The place seemed full of impressive people. Over a lunch of *bramborak labuznik* (potato pancakes) in another beer hall, I sat next to two elderly Czech ladies. Blame my circumspect English upbringing, but I rather expected them to drink something like a *slivovice* (plum brandy) each. They were having none of it, preferring pints of dark beer.

Later, I watched two brewery workers spend half an hour delivering more than a hundred beer barrels. Perhaps the brewery had deregulated their quality control department: certainly the workers spent the next hour drinking large quantities before leaving. Little wonder, then, that one of the first entries in my Czech phrasebook was a translation for "he's absolutely smashed".

Another beerhall – the Two Rams (U Dvou Kozlu), located on the site of the former Communist party's regional headquarters, was so smoky that I almost



When it comes to architecture, Brno beats Prague hands down

PHOTOGRAPH ASPECT

needed a thermal imager to see anything. This is hardly surprising, when you realise that the Czechs have a popular, chain-smoking president and a brand of cigarettes called *Start*.

Seven years ago young Czechs, with or without cigarettes in hand, had approached me in the streets and offered to change money. Now they simply

wanted my opinion. Pavel, a student I met while I was waiting for a bus to Bratislava, was bursting with questions. Was it all right to be disillusioned with democracy so soon, he wanted to know. What did I think of the split with Slovakia? Did the Czech Republic lack confidence as a nation?

Communism here may be pretty much

dead, but another of Brno's past landlords survives – at least in a gastronomic incarnation. Bloated like a Habsburg lip, *parek* (hot sausages) sell from roadside stalls all over the city. The last time I stopped to buy one, it was served on a piece of cardboard with a dollop of mustard. Market forces mean that they now arrive on polystyrene plates.



something to declare

Trouble spots



The following places are at risk from bombings.

India: The Travel Advice Unit of the Foreign Office (0171-238 4503) advises against all travel to Jammu and Kashmir. There have been recent bomb explosions in public places in Delhi (above) and on public transport in neighbouring areas. Reuter reports that 12 train passengers were killed and 37 injured when a bomb exploded on a train in Ambala. Police think it may be part of an escalation of violence before state assembly elections in Punjab, due by next February.

Corsica: a bomb damaged a building owned by the regional authority for northern Corsica last week but caused no injuries. The device exploded outside the northern capital

Bastia, blowing out the windows of the building. It is the latest in a series of bombings, which have occurred mostly at night, by separatists seeking more autonomy from France for Corsica. Casualties are rare.

Ethiopia: A bomb in the Wabe Shabelle Hotel, Addis Ababa, in August killed one person and injured 11, including a European visitor. There have been explosions in other Ethiopian hotels. The Foreign Office advises "vigilance at all times".

Central African Republic: Rebel soldiers in the capital, Bangui, have fired mortar bombs near the French embassy at the Sofitel hotel, where some loyalist government forces are based – Reuter.

Philippa Czernin

A likely story

"The cake will be delivered within 14 days" – Royal Mail promotion.

We like to keep our contributors sweet, especially those of the calibre of Harriet O'Brien (whose story on Cornwall appears on page nine). We also need to watch the budget. So the Royal Mail Send-a-Cake promotion, back in October, presented an ideal solution.

All you had to do was to collect a few first-class stamps and send a voucher to an address in Cambridge. You could have a personalised message added. With Ms O'Brien's birthday impending on 25 October, the timing was ideal. "Happy birthday and many happy returns," we wrote, and with the self-satisfaction of the president, looked forward to another satisfied contributor.

The cake arrived on Monday of this week, over six weeks late. If the Royal Mail had shown the nous to change the message to "Merry Christmas" we could have forgiven the organisation. Except for one thing. Look at the width of this column, then imagine a square cake of that dimension. That is the exact size of the bite-sized confection. Ms O'Brien was amused, but not nourished.

Bargain of the week

After Christmas and New Year, there is always a slump in demand for leisure air travel. In anticipation, Air UK (0345 666777) has brought out a range of cheap fares, both one-way and return, for travel from 6 January to 15 March. The best deals are between London and

Aberdeen or Inverness (£40 one way, £75 return, including tax) and from Stansted to Florence and back (£54 single, £108.60 return). You must book 14 days in advance, but note that the usual "Saturday night stay" rule does not apply – making these handy for business travellers, too.

Visitors' book

Posada Mirador, Chihuahua-Pacifico Railway, Mexico.

Awesome [sic]. Thrilling. Thanks so v much. Keith Thomson and Martha Krupp, Tucson, Arizona.

Wonderful. Wonderful. Wonderful place. Mary and Earl Morris, Portland, Oregon.

Vista Magnifico. Nydia and John Gleine, Tahoe City, Ca.

Too romantic for someone so alone. Alona Guerra, San Antonio, Texas.

Es simplemente un lugar maravilloso. Betty Aguilar, Arocha, Nueva Rosita, Coahuila.

Next Saturday in The Long Weekend

Winter tales: the poet Brian Patten paints a picture of midwinter Kraków in a thousand words.

Plus: sing-your-way-around-the-world – how many naff travel-related Christmas tunes can you identify?



"E suddenly appeared, wearing an ugly smile. He suggested they settle this matter by playing Russian roulette..." In what she expects to be her last major piece of published writing, Martha Gellhorn probes the mysteries of memory, and recaptures astonishing moments from her astonishing life

Plus: David Sylvester on the origins of Cubism; Andy Beckett on a thoroughly modern drifter; and the very best of the year's arts

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Norton Priory: very much a living museum

Photograph: The Norton Priory Museum Trust

'It would be scary at night'

Caroline Millar and her family saw how the monks lived at Norton Priory

The sign for Norton Priory looks incongruous, surrounded by the shaven lawns and hi-tech structures of a Business Park. Your heart starts to sink. It doesn't recover much as you approach a low, modern building in tastefully landscaped surroundings.

Then you step into another world. You see a medieval stonemason hewing stones for a long-gone priory. There's a black canon crouched over his missal. You hear monks chanting. Yes, this is a museum. But it's one that brings you very close to the people who lived and died on the land around you – the monks who were here for four hundred years, until the Dissolution of the Monasteries. The Brooke family, who demolished the priory and built two fine houses, have now also gone.

Your footsteps echo as you walk through the Undercroft – part of the old priory that was used as a cellar. And then outside to the ruins – the Cloister Walk, the chapter house and the graves in the church.

You hear the bell tolling as you walk past the kitchens, to the herb garden and woodland beyond. There is an elegant Georgian summer house and, hidden in

the woods, a Victorian cottage where the ladies and gentlemen used to take tea.

Crossing the bridge over the dual carriageway to the other part of the estate, the 20th century intrudes. But then you enter a swathe of ancient woodland, oaks, elder, and horse-chestnut. The walled garden is closed for the winter, so the day ends in the old pear orchard, with the trees outlined against a darkening sky.

The visitors

Caroline Millar, a freelance writer, went to Norton Priory Museum with her husband, Malcolm, a university lecturer, their son, Thomas, aged seven, and daughter, Claire, aged three.

Caroline: The museum presents the life of the priory very clearly, and Thomas was fascinated. He especially loved the models of the priory as it was being built, and he was still young enough to ask the question, "What happened when they went to the loo?" We satisfied our curiosity later by tracing the path of the drain from the monks' latrine.

On a misty afternoon, it's easy to

imagine that the black canons still pace the cloisters. Not easily spooked, Claire climbed over the ruins. We had to watch carefully, as there are a couple of steep drops.

We saw rabbits, squirrels and birds in the woods. Prepare for a cold winter – the holly was absolutely splattered with red berries. In the clearings you come across work by living artists, a statue or maybe an abstract sculpture. Some of them reminded me of rusty old cars, but then I'm totally unartistic. I did like Coventina, the Celtic goddess of streams and wells, who crouched at the head of the brook.

Thomas: I didn't like walking all day because it made my legs hurt. I liked the model of the church being built. There's scaffolding and ladders and the little people can climb up. There's stonemasons, and even a little bit of cement. I liked learning about the monks in the church and how they lived, and where they put their food.

The Undercroft would be a bit scary at night – you might think ghosts would come out of the bits in the wall. If they

did make a noise it would echo. There's a very old chair in the Undercroft, and very old wood in the fireplace. In one of the graves there is a daddy, and then there were three babies. I think that's very sad.

The bell was good. At first I was scared of the noise but I just swung it very hard and it went whack!

Claire: The skeleton looks a bit scary to me. It's happy because I can see its mouth laughing. He's got no clothes on. He was once a people and then the people died.

I liked the bricks to play with because I like to climb on them. The summer-house looks nice. I can play with the leaves in it, sweeping the leaves up with a brush. Mummy and Daddy say "come on", and I stay because I like to.

Malcolm: A still winter day was a good time to come – it's quiet and very atmospheric here. You see the way life has ebbed and flowed in this place.

I think the sculptures are to show the continuity between the land and man-made objects. The priory stones came

from the land, and later went back to the land. It's an interlinking of nature and man, death and rebirth.

The deal

Norton Priory, Manor Park, Runcorn, Cheshire (01928 569895) Location: From M56 take Junction 11 for Warrington and follow signs for Norton Priory. From other directions follow "all other Runcorn traffic" and then "Norton Priory" signs. By public transport, go by train to Runcorn then take bus 14 to where the Busway crosses the Bridgewater Expressway. It is then a half-mile walk. Winter opening: 12 noon to 4pm daily. Walled Garden closed.

Entrance: adults, £2.60; concessions, £1.40; under-fives, free; family day-ticket for two adults and three children, £6.95.

Access: Good for wheelchairs and buggies. Food and drink: Café in the museum – a few home-made cakes, but mainly wrapped biscuits, sweets and crisps. Coffee, tea and soup available.

Toilets: In the museum. Disabled toilet and baby-change room. Clean and warm. Education: Extensive educational activities. Contact the museum for details.

Are we nearly there?

A weekly round-up of events for children

Christmas themed events are coming thick and fast. It may seem like overkill, but many venues are pulling out the stops to put on some really special activities. (Then again, by the end of all this you may never be able to look a mince pie in the eye again.)

Christmas at the Zoo

London Zoo, Regent's Park Road, London (0171-449 6235) every weekend to 22 December. Special opening on Monday 23 December. Pre-book a half-hour slot between 10.30 and 3.30pm. Price includes access to the rest of the zoo. Adults, £11; children, £5.

At the children's zoo kids can meet Melchior the wise man (and the resident camels), introduce themselves to Santa's reserve reindeer, follow the shepherd with his sheep, or visit Isaac the Innkeeper with his stable of donkeys and ponies. Santa will be in his grotto doling out gifts and there will be mince pies, mulled wine and special hot drinks for children.

Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer

Woolton Hall Natural History Museum, Woolton Park, Nottingham NG8 2AE (0115 928 1333). 19-21 December, 10am-11.30 am and 1pm-2.30pm. Entrance to museum: adults, £1.50 for adults; children, 75p; under-fives, free.

This annual celebration of Christmas is specifically for the under-fives. Activities include singing, storytelling and tree decorating. Children must be accompanied by an adult.

Christmas family fun day

Memorial Hall, Northwich, Vale Royal, Cheshire. 11am-3pm today (01606 41430). Free. Father Christmas will be stopping off on his busy schedule to hand out chocolate coins and buttons at this festive open day thrown by the local council. Children's craft activities: making cards and crackers, decorating T-shirts and prettifying logs to decorate the Christmas table. School orchestras will play all day and the mayor will make a grand draw for charity. The council's cherry-picker will be on hand to give children a bird's-eye view of Northwich.

Winter Wonderland

Marwell Zoological Park, Winchester, Hampshire (01962-777407). Last spaces for Winter Wonderland available 19, 20 December. Wild Lights 16, 17 Dec. Adults, £7.50; children, £7.50; under-tens, £5.50. Pre-booking essential.

Take children to a sparkling walk-through display of traditional and fantasy tableaux at Marwell Zoo, before perusing gift stalls, receiving a gift from Santa and greeting a few of his reindeer. Alternatively, take them along for an exciting evening visit to Wild Lights, to see illuminations in the park.

A Tudor Christmas

Sulgrave Manor, Sulgrave, near Banbury, Oxfordshire (01295-760205) today and tomorrow 10.30am-1pm and 2-4.30pm. Adults, £4; children, £2. Visitors to Sulgrave Manor (home of George Washington's ancestors) will be met by the lord of the manor and his household in Tudor costume. The Great Hall will be decked with seasonal greenery and log fires will be burning. After a guided tour of the manor guests can scold wassail and winter sweetmeats and learn about the customs and traditions of Christmas.

Christmas capers

Clive House Museum, Shrewsbury, Shropshire (01743-354 811) today, 10am-3.30pm, £2.

Get punch-drunk at Clive House Museum where families will be greeted by costumed attendants, and served coffee, mince pies and punch. Children can make their own cards and decorations, and the older ones may like to try their hand at decorating the Christmas cake.

Liese Spencer

One parent, will travel... possibly

Deborah Jackson assesses the value of single-parent offers from the travel industry

"Guaranteed free child holidays!" declare the holiday brochures. But very little is guaranteed if you fail to travel in the traditional family group of two parents and a modest number of children.

Single parents are the ones who probably most need the rest – and the discount, but their needs are usually ignored. Travel operators make few concessions and may even insist that the oldest child pays the full adult rate. So we made some calls on behalf of a single mother with two children, aged six and eight, seeking a high-season holiday abroad or in the UK.

Package holidays abroad

The lone parent does not stand a chance. As the Thomson brochure states, "A free child place is only available for a child sharing a room with two full-fare paying adults", and all the other operators we checked make the same disclaimer. Also, watch out for under-occupancy charges if your room or apartment is meant to take four.

Most of the one-parent family offers we investigated turned out to be of little value. Either they did not apply to a single

parent with two children, or the savings were feeble. Over and over, we were told we'd be better off paying for the oldest child as an adult and taking whatever concessions we could for the youngest.

Airtours (01796 260000): Single parents have to pay two adult fares whatever concessions they receive, said the operator. **Sunworld (0113 255 5222):** The single-parent family saver advertised in the brochure looked promising: "We offer holidays where a special reduction applies to a child sharing a room with only one adult." But, the operator explained, this offer was redundant for a mother of two. "This only applies to one adult, one child. If you have two children, one pays the adult price." **Thomson (0990 673310):** Thomson does not offer any concessions to single parents: "One of your children would have to go as an adult," I was told. I was referred to the Skytours brochure for single-parent offers. **Skytours (0121 252 3424):** Even though this company is really just a brand name for the Thomson group, it has a much more solo-friendly attitude. At last, special deals for single parents at 16

selected hotels and apartments in 13 different resorts including Majorca, Tenerife, Turkey, and Halkidiki, Greece. Both first and second child prices apply to children travelling with just one adult. Unfortunately, neither child counts towards under-occupancy charges on this offer, so supplements could be steep. **First Choice (One Parent Family Hotline 0161 745 4600):** The hotline is new for this year. However, offers apply to a small handful of hotels and apartments, "mostly in Majorca", and places were almost all allocated at the time of calling. "Sometimes it's cheaper to pay two adult fares and take advantage of the free child offer," said the operator. A one-parent family staying at, for instance, the Rosa del Mar apartments in Palma Nova would also be liable for under-occupancy charges of £12 a night in high season, whichever deal they travelled on. **Cosmos (0161 480 5799):** A healthy range of single-parent deals in hotels and all-inclusive resorts from Majorca to Malta and the Gambia. Look out for offers under the "Extra Value" section. Two children (or teenagers) qualify for discounts when travelling with one parent

rather than two. But if one adult is sharing a room with three children, the third child pays the adult price.

Virgin Holidays (01293 617181): Excellent news in the Florida/Caribbean brochure for lone parents with up to three children. "Single Parent Virgins" are invited to enjoy discounts on selected hotels in Orlando, Miami and St Petersburg.

Camping abroad

These holidays are tailor-made for families of unusual shapes and sizes. Under-18s travel free, and one parent can usually travel with four children without paying punitive supplements or extra adult fees.

Eurocamp (01565 626262): One-adult parties are offered £65 off the base holiday price. Operators are extremely helpful in working out the cheapest holiday prices and best deals on crossings. **Keycamp (0181 395 4400):** There's a £60 discount for one-parent families on single-centre holidays departing between 26 June and 20 August (£30 discount on other dates). To qualify, book by 31 January. **French Country Camping (01565 626266):** £65 off the basic holiday price.

Canvas (01383 644000): A reduction of between £30 and £85 for single-parent groups, depending on season. **Haven Europe (01705 466111):** Haven's "Single Saver" offers parties headed by one adult a reduction of £8 a night between 19 July and 1 August, and £4 a night on other dates. This applies to holidays from five to 14 nights long.

Award-winning UK hotels

A very mixed bunch of prices and attitudes from establishments who have won awards for catering for families.

The Knoll House, Studland, Dorset (01929 450450): A devilishly difficult system of adding up the children's ages and turning them into a percentage left us with a 100 per cent bill for the eight-year-old and a 60 per cent reduction for the six-year-old. "So the oldest child pays an adult fee?" I asked. "Well, yes, but it's not as simple as that," I wish it were. **The Saunton Sands Hotel, Braunton, Devon (01271 890212):** One parent sharing with children in a triple-bedded room will not be penalised. "One child should pay an adult fee, but we would normally

waive that." Children each receive their normal reduction from the adult tariff (40 per cent for a six- and an eight-year-old). **Crieff Hydro, Perthshire (01764 655555):** There are no double occupancy supplements for single parents, who qualify for the usual child discounts, according to age. **Trevelgue Hotel, Porth, Cornwall (01637 872864):** "We aim to give a great deal," said owner Nicholas Matcolm. "No single supplements, all discounts – even the youngest child free, when applicable." One-parent treats include complimentary childcare tickets; free use of gym, squash and tennis facilities, introductions to other guests for sports and entertainment; childcare at dinner time and priority booking on children's clubs. Top marks.

The National Council for One Parent Families (0171-267 1361) produces a free information brochure. There's also a 'Guide to Holidays for One Parent Families' from the Holiday Care Service (01293 774535). **One Parent Family Holidays (01776 889500)** is a specialist tour operator offering hotel and camping holidays, mainly abroad. **Holiday Endeavour for Lone Parents (01302 728791)** arranges discounted holidays and day trips.

all consuming

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How fir can you go?

Christmas trees are seriously fashionable, says Jane Furnal

Firs are in fashion. We're in the grip of the greatest nostalgia for Christmas trees since Christmas was invented. Bejewelled branches are everywhere. Liberty's of London has sold out of tassels at £2 each. People will pay florists £80 for a day's lesson in dressing a tree.

We like to think of our trees as being intrinsic to the spirit of Christmas. In fact, no other age bothered so much about them. Homes and interiors magazines for the last century have few. Tree decorations instantly sum up the spirit of the age. To see a society's priorities, look at the top first. The patriotic Victorians had a Union Jack. Now the Empire has gone, we turn to angels and fairies.

The Americans always stuck to gold, in the form of gilded fruit. In 1897 a former railway worker, James Clements, decked his tree with \$70,000-worth of gold nuggets he had found in the Klondike gold rush.

The first recorded Christmas tree just had paper roses. Scholars blab about pagan nature-revival rites, but in fact it started at an office party in Latvia, around 1510. The lads of the merchants' guild cut down an evergreen, decked it with roses, danced round it in the marketplace, then set fire to it.

After that, fun firs (though not fun fires) caught on, prompting a serious crackdown in 16th-century Alsace: "No one shall have more than one Christmas tree or more than eight shoe lengths." In good EC tradition, this was ignored.

Tree decor was religious. The rose for the Virgin Mary. Coloured wafers for holy communion with Christ. In time, these became gilded fruit, to be eaten on Twelfth Night.

The German-cum-British royal family introduced trees here. In 1848 the *Illustrated London News* carried a sketch of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert in front of a tree decorated, as he recalled it from his childhood, with candles and baskets of sweets.

Religious roses and wafers were out of the window for the acquisitive, Protestant Victorians. Their desired effect was Tutankhamun's Tomb meets the *Generation Game*. All human life was hung on that tree, from beads to the kitchen sink.

Dickens is the usual suspect for creating Christmas, but his only mention of trees, in a magazine article of 1850, describes someone else's, not his own. It had "dolls, real watches, tables, chairs, bedsteads, wardrobes, eight-day clocks wonderfully made in tin... fiddles and drums, guns, swords..."

Christmas tree candle accidents were few, but tragic enough to make a few concerned eccentrics consider inventing electric fairy lights. Mazda got there first with elaborate strings of coloured Santa faces, more elaborate, contrived and exciting than today's.

In 1900, the Vanderbilts showed off theirs on a 30ft tree, which cost \$200 a day in electricity. Not a success. By 1905 they had returned to the latest "drip proof" candles.

With the 1914 war, we naturally turned our back on German decorations. Their thin, solemn Santa was replaced by a fat smiling American version on paper. The thrifty saved last year's tree, bare of needles, and re-erected it next year, cloaked in white cotton quilted wadding to represent snow.

After the war, silhouettes were slimmer. In the Thirties, the convenience Christmas arrived in the form of a tinsel tree with fold-down branches and built-in glass icicle decorations.

But the movies reintroduced glamorous, schmaltzy and highly commercial Christmases. Tinsel trees matched the glitzy diamonds worn by the stars.

In 1938, Christmas was licensed to Disney. Children were desperate to see the new film, *Snow White*, then take home the tree baubles to match. And these were baubles shaped like the airships, labelled Graff Zeppelin.

The Second World War brought austerity. The Geffrye Museum in London has a tiny tinsel tree to be folded up and carried to the air raid shelter during the Blitz. You couldn't get silver or gold paint, so glass balls were clear, or painted with stripes.

But by the Fifties, brash, acid colours were in. "Space has become a spiritual necessity: remove non-essentials from your room," intoned *House and Garden* magazine in 1950. Glass balls were quasi-scientific, with conical indentations, like hollow tumblers. Smaller beads were wired together like molecular models. Nylon threads covered polystyrene scientific balls.

The writer S.J. Perelman was driven insane by trying out the suggestions of a Mr Lester Gaba in *Mademoiselle* magazine: "Dip tips of twisted cotton strips into India ink and trim your tree entirely with 'ermine tails'. Pin a fresh mauve orchid to the top."

The dissenting voice of Cool was always around. The higher your class, the less your tree. In 1875, the Aesthetes might hang a few unlit, tiny paper lanterns on some bare twigs in a dark corner of the room. In 1960, *House and Garden* shows decorator Nancy Lancaster's Bond Street flat at Christmas. You can just see a shred of tinsel cowering in a pot plant.



Tree decorations instantly sum up the spirit of the age

PHOTOGRAPH: HULTON GETTY

The Sixties proved to be a DIY-fest. When we had finished papering over original features, there were modern trees to make, to match your home-licked paperchains. Tidy the bachelor tree, made by impaling hundreds of cigarettes on wires stuck in florist's foam in a vase. Or use marshmallows. "Colour-stressed tibits" are the things to stick on the tree, as *Ideal Homes* put it. We struggled with eggshells on barley stalks, stars made of drinking straws, and holly painted white and stuck into lumps of Plasticine.

By 1970, the Pill was in, and children and Christmas trees weren't. You might stick a star on top of your giant cactus, paint honesty leaves red, poke some twigs into a milk bottle or drape some tinsel over bendy floor lights drooping over the table.

Suddenly came the Eighties, designer doo-dahs, and trees power-dressed to match the pussycat-bowed blouses of successful women everywhere. "Single colour themes," advised *Homes and Gardens*, "are more elegant". White iridescent trees gave way to natural-looking artificial ones with gold baubles tied with swathes of ribbon and bows.

Fairy lights caught disco fever, and started repeating on us like the onion soup that we ate in chic little bistros.

Banks did up their reception areas in tartan to emphasise the Scottish values of thrift and reliability, and trees matched. People paid hundreds of pounds for a pair of round-clipped box trees to put beside the coal-effect gas fire.

Then the recession struck. A late-Eighties best-seller was an ironic cardboard cut-out tree, complete with printed-on decorations. Meanwhile the "haves" bought expensive designer-decorated trees that looked quite ordinary until you noticed Vivienne Westwood on the label.

What of the Nineties? Minimalists buy bare-branched trees like witches' broomsticks. Ecologists stick outdoor lights and balls of bird food on the growing tree in the front garden.

But when we're honest, most of us prefer a family tree, a marker of real tradition, with faded tinsel, the candles your granny kept in their old clips and children's hand-made decorations. The white-painted holly in Plasticine has bypassed naff and become nostalgia.

The Geffrye Museum, Kingsland Road, London E2 8EA, has a small exhibition of Christmas trees through the ages (recorded information, 0171-739 8543).



bazaar

good thing

Micromap starter pack, £19.99; additional city centres £9.99.

The Micromap is a cunning pocket-sized viewer through which tiny maps are magnified, and it could mean the end of bulky road atlases and unwieldy maps. The starter pack includes a set of laminated maps, no larger than credit cards, and the tiny hand held viewer into which they're slotted. Additional packs of maps include twenty UK regional cities, a comprehensive guide to London, ten European city centres and ten cities in America.

For mail order call 0800-421 252. Micromap is also available from Harrods, Selfridges, Leading Edge, The General Trading Co, and the YHA Shop.

mad thing



Fashion pundits can recreate fresh and zany catwalk looks using "Twirlees". Add an electric-blue stripe à la Chanel in an instant. Club queens and disco divas can also add Twirlees to synchronise their latest look. Available in siren red, pixie green, electric blue, petal pink, canary yellow and this season's favourite: passionate purple.

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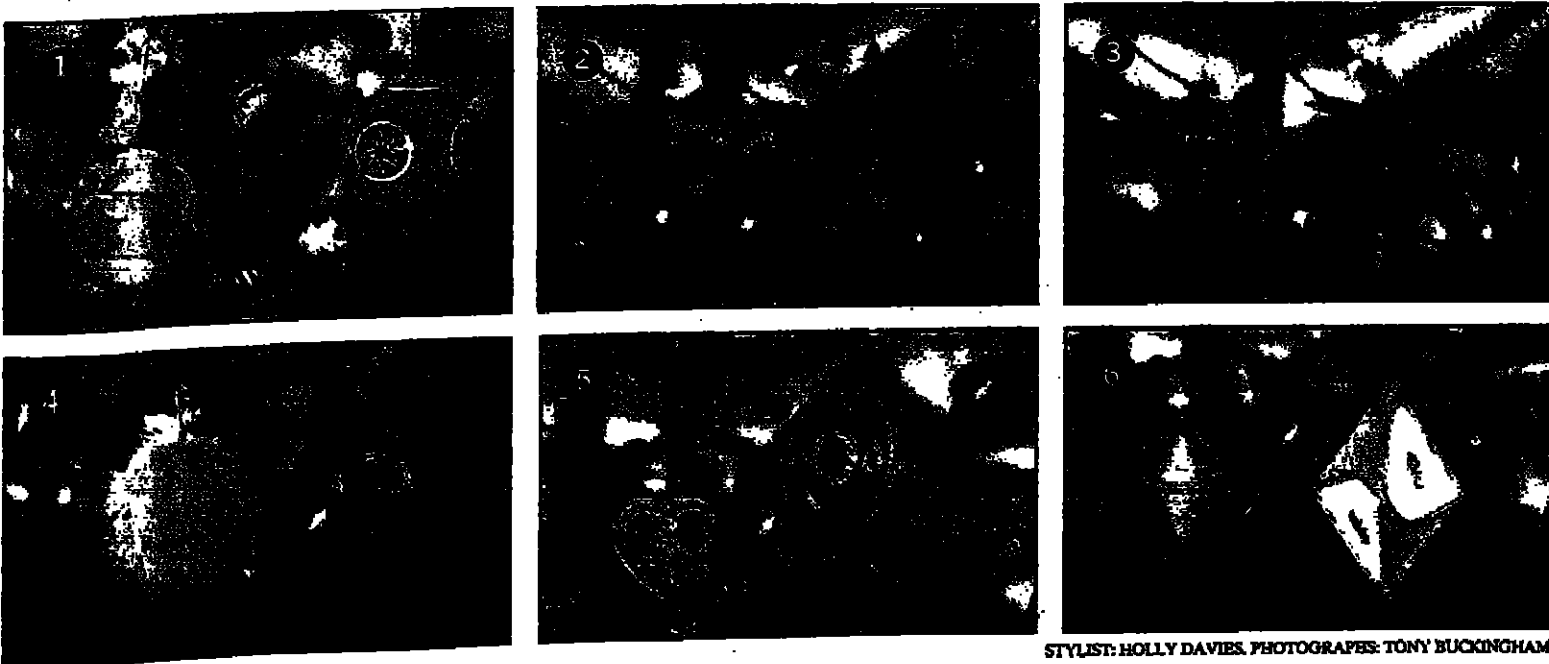
sure thing

Cocktail shaker, £15 and Martini glasses, £8 for a set of four.

No party is complete without cocktails, and Martinis are just the thing: easy to make and easier still to drink. Get yourself down to M&S and grab one of these sleek chrome shakers and a set of Martini glasses. But remember, this is the drink that 007 got wrong - Martinis are never shaken, you should use the shaker to rinse your ice with Dry Vermouth, pour off the liquid, drop the ice cubes into the glass and top up with your chosen poison. If you like your Martini gin based try Tanqueray, which comes in a bottle to match this shaker, and if you prefer vodka make sure it's Polish.

Marks and Spencer stores nationwide.

Six of the best... for a well decorated 1996



STYLIST: HOLLY DAVIES. PHOTOGRAPHER: TONY BUCKINGHAM

It's time to make a trip to the loft or garage, or under the stairs, to drag out last year's Christmas decorations. Having to buy new ones can be annoying, but it's comforting to know that everyone has the same problem. Either you force yourself to admit how fatty they're beginning to look - or you find yourself gazing stubbornly at the same old baubles, year in, year out.

We feature alternatives to the traditional red and green balls - from hand-made Russian diamonds to mirrored disco balls. Travel further afield, think globally, and you won't need much else - maybe some fairy lights, but no tinsel.

1 Pink and red patterned papier mâché ball, £2.75; orange and yellow papier mâché ball, also £2.75; both from Habitat, 196 Tottenham Court Road, London W1 and nationwide (0645 334433).

2 Orange silk thread ball with mirror work, £3; fuzzy pink ball with tassels, £3, both from Design Guild, 267-271 Kings Road, London SW5 (0171-2437 3000).

3 Orange ceramic lantern, £11; blue lantern, £15; from Garden Cuniatti, 83 Westbourne Park Road, London W2 (0171-229 8559).

4 Pink feather ball, £2.99; disco ball, £1.99. Paperchase, 213 Tottenham Court Road, London W1 and nationwide (0171-5800 8496).

5 Red embroidered heart, £3.50; purple embroidered ball, £8.50; from Liberty, 214-220 Regent Street, London W1 (0171-730 1234).

6 Gold satin thread Russian drop, £3.99; white and gold Russian diamond, £3.99. From Selfridges, 400 Oxford Street, London W1 (0171-629 1234).

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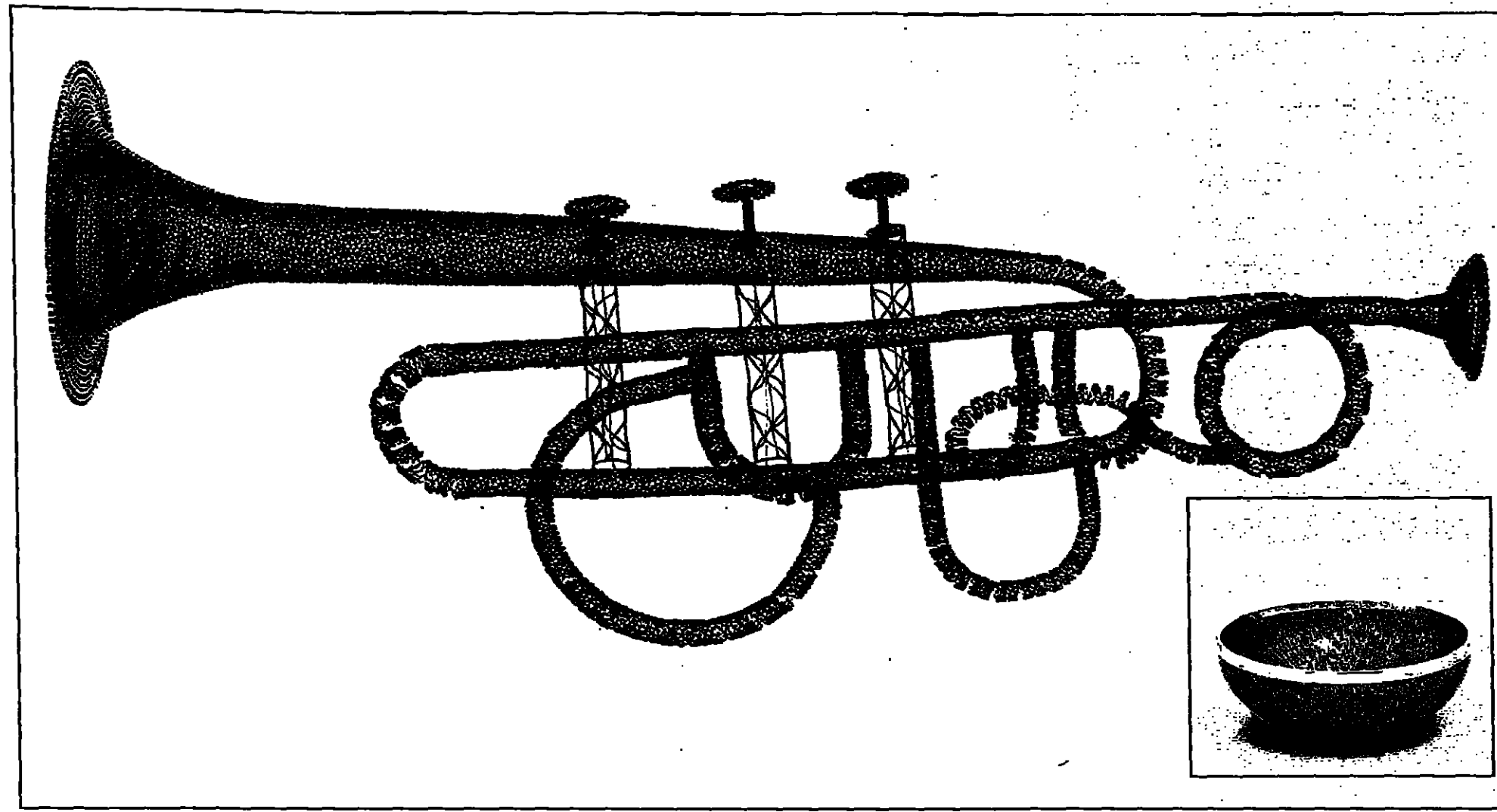
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An end to the silver standard

European laws are rendering the assay offices obsolete. By John Windsor



Main picture: Robert Baines's 'The Entropy of Red'; and inset an Ian Ferguson bowl, both from the V&A's silver galleries

After nearly 700 years, the UK's oldest form of consumer protection – the compulsory hall-marking of silver by British assay offices – is coming to an end. This will be the last Christmas when shoppers can buy contemporary silver giftware – tankards, candlesticks, jewellery – bearing only British hallmarks.

Next spring, following a European Court of Justice ruling, changes to UK hall-marking law will permit European exporters to sell silver bearing neither the official British import hallmark, nor the hallmark of the International Hall-marking Convention, the only other hallmark recognised by the UK.

It will be lawful to sell imported articles described as silver without first submitting them for content testing and hall-marking at one of the UK's four independent assay offices – or having them stamped, prior to export, with the hallmark of the Convention, a group of 10 European countries (including Britain) that enforces rigorous standards of independent assay.

What will become compulsory throughout the EC is recognition of the

hallmarks of most European countries, even those not in the Convention.

These include Spain, France and the Netherlands – countries which, despite their compulsory and independent hall-marking systems, are not members of the Convention because their assaying procedures are not considered to be stringent enough.

As a result, British shoppers will need to accustom themselves to a confusing array of European hallmarks, such as the French eagle. They will no longer be sure to find on contemporary silver currently familiar hallmarks, such as the Convention's weighing scales, symbol of justice, or the British inverted-omega with its accompanying regional hallmark: a horseshoe (for London and Sheffield), a triangle (for Birmingham) or a cross of St Andrew (Edinburgh), plus the 925 in an oval, indicating that it is 92.5 per cent sterling silver.

As for the traditional dog-eared A4-size hallmark guide pinned to the wall at the jeweller's, it will no longer be of use to consumers wanting to know whether the French tolerate variations either side of their eccentric 800 stand-

ard, or whether the Dutch permit hall-marking of mixed metals – none of which is at present legal in this country. To find out would require a collection of scarce and expensive reference books – or a trip to Brussels.

The brushing aside of British hall-marking law by Brussels has enraged members of Britain's silver establishment. Lord Broadbridge, a Liveryman of the Goldsmiths Company and an amateur silversmith for 20 years, says: "In an age when consumer protection is to the fore, the Europeans seem to be moving against it. The public will have no idea what they're buying."

"No other country in the world but ours has such a complete and ideal system of hall-marking. I don't want to depart from it one jot."

According to Sir Jerry Wiggin, MP and promoter of the existing Hall-marking Act (1973), the EC's threat to British hall-marking will be strongly resisted. He says: "I've spoken to everybody from the Prime Minister down and they are solidly against these changes."

The name that defenders of British hall-marking whisper is Houtwipper. It

sounds like the name of a cad in a PG Wodehouse novel. In fact, it is Mrs Ludomira Neeltje Barbara Houtwipper, charged under Dutch hall-marking law – similar to ours – with attempting to sell imported silver and gold rings without the required Dutch import marks.

The European Court of Justice found against her, on the grounds that her goods were not hall-marked at all. However, it ruled that goods with hallmarks stamped in a member state by an independent body "equivalent" to that required by Dutch law, which are "intelligible" to consumers, could be legally offered for sale in the Netherlands without additional Dutch hall-marking. The judgment was seen as a windfall by Dutch, French and Spanish silversmiths.

That was in September 1994. There is now a rush, described by the Department of Trade and Industry as "relatively urgent", to bring British law into line with Houtwipper. Failure to do so will result in "infringement proceedings", starting with an official request by the EC Commission for an explanation. Apart from Houtwipper, there is a

more explosive shot against British hall-marking lying in the EC locker: a draft directive that would make legal not only hallmarks by approved independent bodies such as the British assay offices, but also by silver manufacturers themselves. Independent hall-marking and manufacturer's marks, according to the draft, are "equivalent". Others consider that marking by manufacturers is an invitation to fraud.

It is the threat of being forced by the EC to accept manufacturers' marking – as practised by Europe's two biggest silver manufacturers, Italy and Germany – that has caused most fear and outrage among British silversmiths.

Lord Broadbridge says: "German and Italian manufacturers' marks are a disgrace. They are judge and jury in the same court." David Evans, Assay Master of Goldsmiths Hall, adds: "If, as the European Commission deems, manufacturers' marks and independent hallmarks are 'equivalent', and you can't tell the difference between them, what's the point of independent hall-marking? Consumers might as well hallmark silver themselves."

'Our fine silver needs no hallmark'

Silversmiths in the "non-hallmarking" countries, Italy and Germany, have about Britain's compulsory hall-marking of imports. A "trade restriction", they say.

But what of contemporary silversmiths in this country? Some of those at the cutting edge of silver design do not give a jot for hall-marking. What is the relevance to silver design, they ask scornfully, of a system devised by Edward I in 1300 to make sure that silver plate turned into coin was of the same sterling standard? Alistair McCallum, a 51-year-old Australian silversmith working in this country, says: "The only good reason for hall-marking a piece of silver is if it has no artistic value, only bullion value."

His bowls, by the Japanese *mokume gane* or "wood-grain" process, so-called because of its flecks of silver mixed with copper, cost about £2,000 each. The mixture of metals disqualifies them from hall-marking as silver. Even the silver rim of one of them was rejected by the London assay office on the grounds that it was attached to mixed metal. So he no longer bothers with hall-marking. That means he cannot legally call his work silver. But so what? "People who buy my work are aware of its value – and that is not determined just by weighing it."

He defends maker-marking, legal in Australia. "Frauds have the book thrown at them by the Trade Practices Commission."

McCallum's bowls are not the only contemporary silverware that seem to be retreating ever farther beyond the pale of the assay office. Who would have guessed that the

red wire trumpet by another Australian, 48-year-old Robert Baines, was silver at all? In fact it is silver wire lacquered red. To hallmark it would be to knock a hole in it.

Has British hall-marking law cramped creativity in design? After all, Britain has no dedicated retailer of contemporary silverware and the few contemporary commissioned pieces that crop up at auction get knocked down for as little as a tenth of their price when new.

You can form your own opinion by visiting the V&A's new silver galleries, opened last month, where you can compare displays of silverware commissioned by the V&A, which include Baines's unhallmarked trumpet, McCallum's unhallmarked bowls and some delightfully straggly unhallmarked necklaces of oxidised silver that look like barbed wire, by the 40-year-old Briton Cynthia Cousins.

"The point of this gallery," says its curator, Philippa Glanville, "is to see how conservative, or otherwise, the Brits are. We don't take sides on hall-marking."

The trumpet? "It's conceptual art, isn't it? very much a feature of the Eighties and Nineties." A legitimate use for the silver? "It couldn't have been made out of anything else. Silver is malleable, ductile and has this great softness, fussiness. Can't you just imagine Robert Baines sitting at his fireside, knitting it?"

By contrast, the most striking piece in the Goldsmiths Hall cabinet is 42-year-old Jane Short's vase with enamelled jay's wing decoration. It was hallmarked on the bottom before enamelling.

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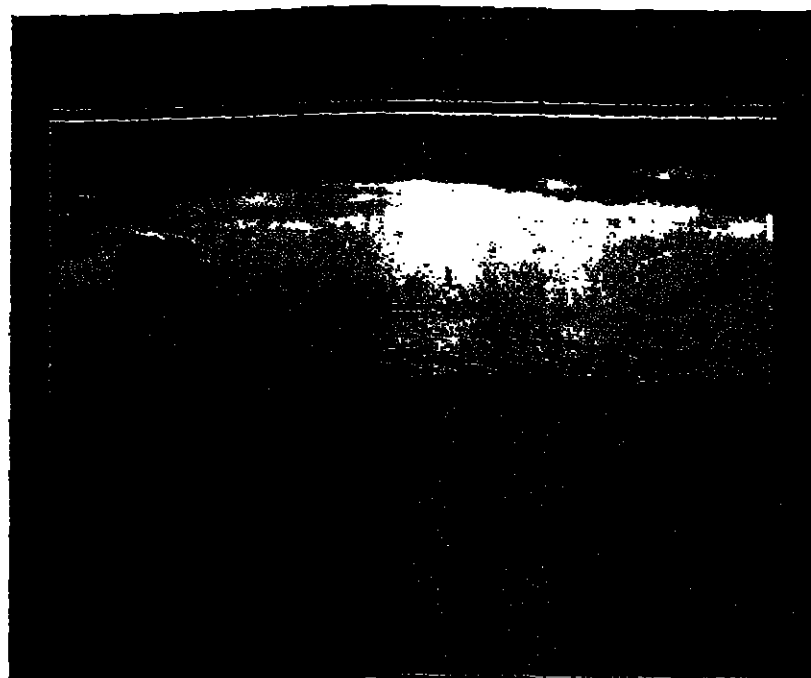
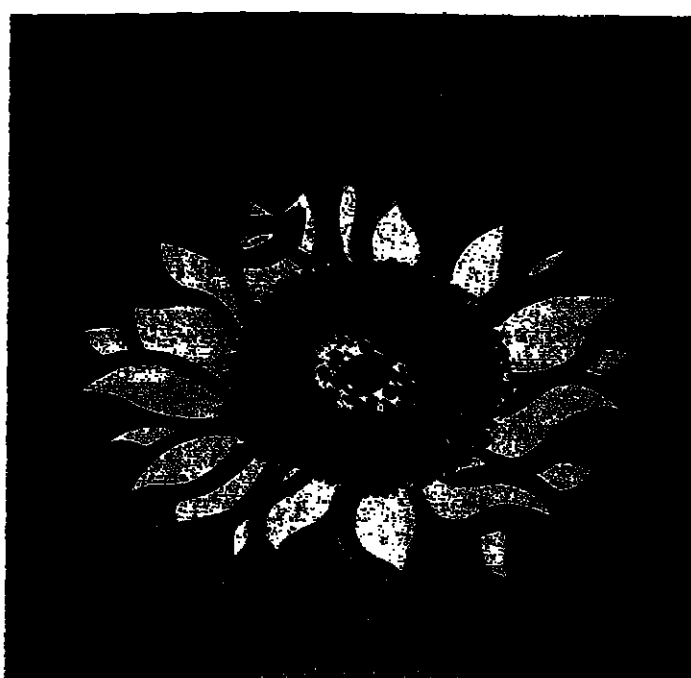
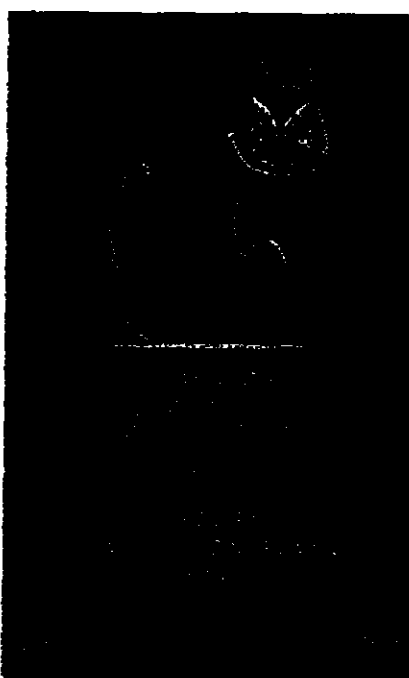
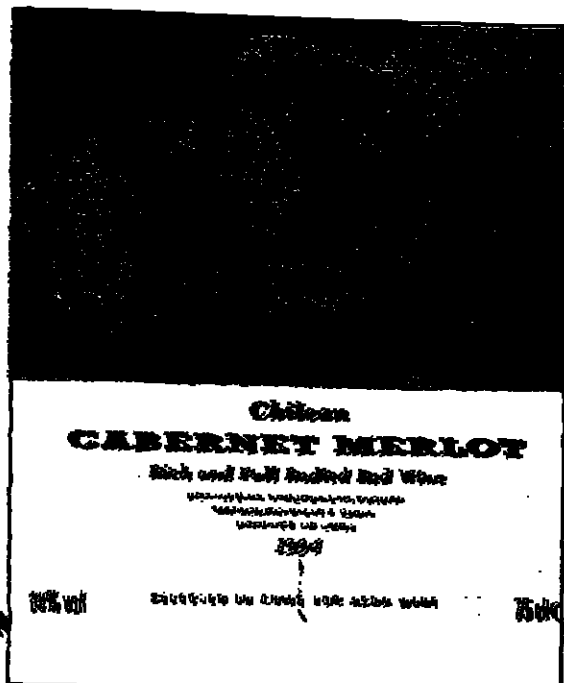
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Evil Kid

1991 12 14

Never mind the bottles...

As we drink more wine the packaging has become more frivolous, writes Sheila Prophet



What do Trio, Poets Corner and Catalyst have in common? And who are Big Frank, Cardinal Zin and the Fat Bastard? Believe it or not, these are all brands of wine. Wine marketing is becoming bolder and brasher by the day, with wacky names, riotous labels and sexy bottles. It seems it's all part of Britain's new, light-hearted attitude to the grape.

Ten years ago we didn't understand wine and we stuck to those stolid North European wines that were designed to go with food," says David Howes, Communications Manager of Thresher Wine Shops. "Then the Australians reinvented wine and gave us something fresh, fruity and springy which was great to drink on its own. The packaging changed along with the style of wine. Today we all know much more about wine, it's part of everyday life, and we are demanding a bit of frivolity."

If the Aussies started the whole thing, supermarkets such as Tesco and Sainsbury have also done their bit by taking the fear out of buying wine. One major advance is what the trade calls "varietal" labelling, which means labelling wine by the grape rather than the region it comes from. The result is that now we all know our Chardonnays from our Sauvignons.

The other big change is the attention given to

labels. The ideal back label contains clear, helpful information about the wine itself and the serving of it, while the front is often a miniature work of art.

Beautiful labels were once confined to very expensive wines, such as Château de Mouton Rothschild, whose makers commissioned artists such as Picasso to illustrate them. These days everyday wines under a fiver are doing the same thing.

Nick Dymoke-Marr, Senior Wine Buyer for the supermarket chain Asda says: "Labels are especially important to us because 80 per cent of our buyers are women and there is a saying that the first glass is with the eye. Wine also has a certain romance, which we want to preserve."

The result is that many bottles now bear names and scenes which evoke their exotic origins. Asda have a range of Greek wines called Temple Ruins and Marble Mountain, and of course there are numerous Australian Wines with unpronounceable names and dreamy water colours depicting the outback.

There's no doubt these pictures are pretty, but are they accurate? "Sometimes we do use a bit of artistic licence," confesses David Howes. "When we launched Kings Canyon, a Californian wine, the makers sent over their idea for the label, a pretty picture with apple trees and little animals playing

around. It wasn't what we wanted at all. Instead we sent back a picture of rugged scenery, with great rocks reaching to the sky, and said 'This what we want'. OK, it is actually in Arizona, but it looks dramatic on the shelf."

Drama is also the key when it comes to colour. Eye-catching reds, oranges and yellows remain the favourite choices, although the very latest trend is to break a long held colour taboo in the industry and use the colour blue.

"We have a South African wine called Lost Horizons, which is in a blue bottle. We were always told never to use blue with wine, though no one seems to know where this taboo came from, but people seem to like it, as it is selling extraordinarily well," says Geraldine Jago, Wine Development Manager of The Victoria Wine Company.

In fact the bottles themselves can be an important selling point. Remember those Paul Masson carafes we all collected a few years ago?

"The newest bottle is sexy - long and slim with a flanged lip at the top to stop drips, and a tiny label," says David Howes. "The Californian company Gallo have used this shape for their wine Turning Leaf, and a Chilean winemaker called Ignacio Recabarren has used it for a wine called Trio which he produced for us. He says the name represents the three elements of wine, the soil, the climate and the maker - he is a very vain man!

When he first produced Trio, Ignacio said, "This bottle has the beauty of Sharon Stone - you can see everything you are getting!"

An increasing number of wines are named after people, some of whom exist and some don't. The Victoria Wine Company, for example have a popular range named Big Frank - there's Big Frank's Red, Big Frank's White, and his latest, a sweet wine called Big Frank's Seriously Sticky. "Yes, Big Frank exists," says Geraldine Jago. "He is Frank Chludinski, a Pole from Boston who married a lady from the South of France whose father had a vineyard, and now he makes wine. We also have Ed's Red, and he exists too. He is flying winemaker Ed Flaherty."

However, Fat Bastard, a Chardonnay sold by the new Firkin chain is not named after an overbearing vineyard owner with a big appetite. Instead the wine was apparently christened when its French maker, Thierry Boudinaud, tasted it and pronounced it "a fat bastard of a Chardonnay".

Trendy chain Oddbins have a few characters of their own, though they admit these exist only in the imaginations of eccentric winemaker Randall Graham and the artist Ralph Steadman, who designs many of their labels. "There is the Cat, a cat named in a bar in Santa Cruz, close to Randall's vineyard, and there is Cardinal Zin, a religious chap who has been tempted off the

straight and narrow by the Zinfandel grape," says Oddbins' Karen Wise.

Randall's other wines include the authentically Italian sounding Rosato Del Fiasco, named because the first batch proved a disaster, and two best-selling bottles simply called Bloody Good White and Bloody Good Red.

Thankfully, wine isn't yet competing with alcopops such as Two Dogs, named after the rude schoolboy joke about the first thing the Indian baby saw outside its wigwam. But jokiness is definitely catching on. The Victoria Wine Company already sells a New Zealand Sauvignon called Cat's Pee On A Gooseberry Bush, which surprisingly sells well, and even sillier names look set to follow.

It may all be just a gimmick, but it seems to be working. Our consumption of wine has quadrupled in the last 25 years, and even wine experts are smiling. "Cat's Pee and Fat Bastard may be straining the boundaries of good taste, but on the whole the use of humour to break down the fear of buying wine and to make it more accessible can only be a good thing," says Gareth Lawrence of the Wine and Spirit Education Trust. "Of course it wouldn't work if the wine itself didn't match up, but that isn't the case. In the last few years there has been a vast improvement in the standards of even the cheapest wines."

...but pull out all the stops

Sam Coates tests that most important of seasonal aids - the corkscrew

A belt buckle, blunt razor or thumb is all it takes the persistent to open a bottle of wine. However, for those not prepared to display such desperation, the heart-sinking mantra: "Does anyone have a corkscrew?" must be chanted at every party.

In the true spirit of the clergy, it was a devotee of the cloth who, by patenting the corkscrew, brought man closer to drink. The first English patent was issued to a clergyman named Samuel Henshall in 1795. He simply added a disc to the end of the worm (the curly bit that goes into the cork) to compress the cork and improve the screw's pulling power. It was sold at an auction last April, along with a 1905 German model whose handles, between which the screw was attached, formed the legs of a semi-naked lady.

Both items came from the personal collection of an Italian, Gianni Giachin, who lived in London until his death last year and had one of the world's biggest corkscrew collections. The public were obviously delighted by them, paying between £100 and £2,000 per lot.

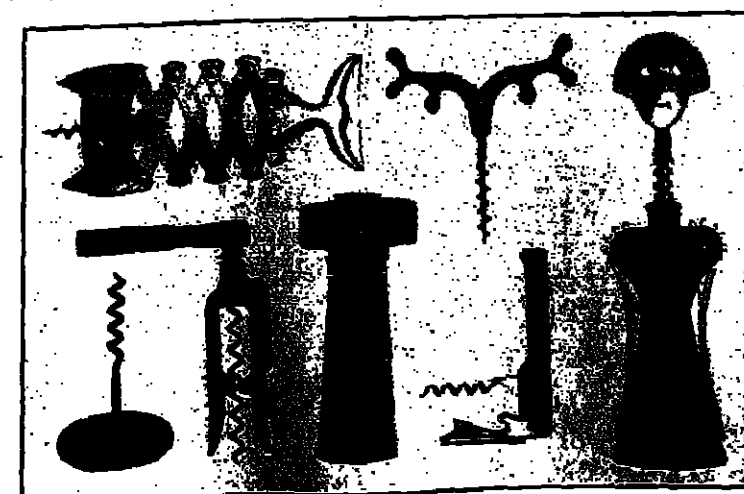
For David Howes, a Threshers' wine taster, the way the bottle is opened affects the taste of the wine. "The corkscrews which require less effort are better," he says, "because they cause the least agitation to the liquid inside. I think the Screwpull is the best, if a little expensive: we sell models for up to £80. On the whole, those devices with a nail-like worm are the worst because they break easily and require a lot more effort."

The Independent had the onerous task of opening innumerable bottles, so we could advise our readers which corkscrew to buy this Christmas.



Anna Green corkscrew, £32.95 A must for socialite Dr Who fans. This monster contraption bears more than a passing resemblance to a Time Lord-chasing cyberman, dressed in a turquoise-coloured party dress. The design is very Freudian: when you push down its arms, the cork pops out from under the girl's dress. Hideous the contraption and hideous the price.

Walter's Friend, £4.95 This is the equivalent of a penknife with the more exciting arms removed. It's small and light, which makes it



amiably portable, but also easy to misplace. If you don't want to appear pretentious, the Harrods label can be scratched off without too much difficulty. Less than a fiver, it's probably the cheapest thing in the whole store. (Harrods, Knightsbridge: 0171 730 1234)

Screwpull, by Le Creuset, £16.80 This corkscrew would have made Dr Rubik proud; those with aching brains this Christmas should steer well clear. However, according to corkscrew connoisseurs, owning this device is the zenith to which the wine-drinking public should aspire. It is based (says the office intellectual) on the Crick and Watson dou-

ble helix principle, and its Teflon coating means that little effort is required: just place the lip of the device against the bottle and start turning. Available from Divertment Mail Order (0171 386 9911).

Antlers, £17.95 Elegantly sculpted to fit Frank Bruno's knuckles, this one is based on the original tried and tested design. Don't bother to buy it - in fact, if you do have £17.95 to throw away, why not spend it on international phone calls in an attempt to track down a plastic model of Buzz Lightyear from Disney's Toy Story?

Autopull, £9.95 "The ethos of the Nineties is convenient but dull." In keeping with this, the Autopull is about as boring as a corkscrew can get. It is made of dull black or white plastic, is based on the principal of the screwpull, and it works! Its only mentionable feature is its bland appearance: it would clash horribly at the dinner table with the antique candlesticks and Waterford crystal.

The Lazy Fish, £19.95 There is a wide range of possible uses for the Lazy Fish but a corkscrew is not the first that springs to mind. It could be more gainfully used as a novelty door stopper. It strongly resembles a pair of pliers with the end missing. One look at it, and it'll be quite clear why this will undoubtedly be the most popular corkscrew this Christmas. Its bright, shiny surface lures the most vulnerable of relatives (still with no idea of what to buy for Christmas) - and its elastic design will keep the recipient amused for many minutes. The fishbone con-certaina structure drastically reduces the effort needed to extract a cork from a bottle - but unfortunately it rather impedes the progress of the screw into the cork in the first place.

La Poigne Wood Corkscrew, £29.95 La poigne ici, c'est que les instructions sont en français. Alors, according to the back of the packet this is an "objet précieux"; that is, you have to pay a lot of money for a chunk of wood which you can screw to the wall to hold the corkscrew.

Jerry's Home Store (0171 581 0909); the Conran Shop (0171 589 7402)

Adwatch: liqueurs

By Meg Carter

Proof (if it were needed) that Christmas is but ten days away comes in the blitz of commercials now airing for Santa's favourite: sticky liqueurs. Just as aunts and uncles across the land dust off the remains of last year's bottle, so the drinks companies are lining up their battalions for this year's festive onslaught.

Archers, Baileys, DiSaronno amaretto, Sheridan's, Tia Maria and more - not to mention a selection of sherries and ports from Croft's to Cockburn - are once more gracing our TV screens, each with a promise of elegance and sophistication.

Take Sheridan's, currently sporting a stylish black-and-white ad highlighting conflicting emotions - love and hate, trust and betrayal. You can't appreciate one without the other, the end-line explains: just as the brand's dark coffee liqueur must be mixed with the accompanying white liqueur cream.

Likewise, Tia Maria. Having dropped Eighties super model Iman, advertising agency Rainey Kelly Campbell Roalfe's new campaign features an enigmatic Princess of Darkness. The sequence of artfully shot ads, which blend style and sophistication with film noir, were shot by Highlander 2 director Andy Morahan.

Yet behind the customary gloss a number of manufacturers are attempting to effect a subtle change of tack. For many years, Christmas has marked the focus of their year's marketing activities. Now, they are attempting to position their products as an all-year-round tipple.

So, Tia Maria exploits the vogue for quaffing coffee liqueur mixed with Coke. And Baileys, which for the first time uses humour, features a couple in evening dress apparently getting up to something naughty in an ancient, rickety lift (in fact, they are simply enjoying an innocent glass of Baileys).

The idea is to encourage consumers to consider

drinking Baileys whenever they go out - not just when they're staying at home, explains Hugh Burkin, chairman of Baileys' agency Court Burkin and Company. A previous campaign featured a man bringing in sacks of ice to add to the drink - another attempt to re-position it as more than an after-dinner liqueur.

"We know people love the taste of all these liqueurs, but unfortunately they tend to categorise - in this case, liqueurs are still seen by many as after dinner drinks or as drinks for Christmas," adds Tim O'Donnell, marketing controller at International Distillers (IDV) and Vintners whose brands include Baileys, Sheridan's, DiSaronno and Drambuie.

However, IDV has worked to re-position its liqueurs by encouraging consumers to try them in pubs, bars and restaurants, throughout the year and in bigger measures - as a long drink. Baileys, which remains market leader with sales 70 per cent ahead of any other product, now enjoys only 60 per cent of annual sales at Christmas; not so long ago the figure was nearer 100 per cent.

The move seems to be paying off. Sales of DiSaronno are up 60 per cent year on year over the past 12 months. Meanwhile Sheridan's, a much newer brand, is "flying", he claims.

The effect on the liqueurs market as a whole, however, remains harder to quantify. Current estimates suggest total sales are growing at a much slower rate - annual sales now stand at around 32 million bottles. According to O'Donnell, growth for IDV has been at the expense of smaller rival brands.

Small wonder if competitors are now also attempting to re-position their liqueurs as a cool and flexible drink anytime and anywhere. They just can't afford not to. After all, it's hardly good for business if your product is only served three days out of 365, while for the rest of the year it sits in sticky obscurity - at the back of the drinks cabinet.

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homes & money

Wall Street's bubble
could burst.....22
Letting out your home
to film-makers.....23



Empty pockets

My biggest mistake

Businessman
Howard Hodgson

"Back in 1987, when I still had Hodgson Holdings, my funeral directors company, I had to get an early train from Birmingham to London. We were buying Ingels Industries, a chain of funeral homes, from House of Fraser, and I had 60 institutions waiting at the other end to see me at Capel Cure Myers. I got to Birmingham International Station, locked the car, grabbed my briefcase and tapped my back pocket to make sure I'd got my wallet. As soon as I did it, I knew where it was - on the bedside cabinet at home. That was 25 minutes in the opposite direction and it would have meant missing the train. I didn't have enough petrol in the car to get to London and, anyway, I would never have made it in time. It was a 6.40 train, and my first meeting was at 9am. I had no wallet, no cash, no credit cards - nothing. But I had to be there for those meetings.

so I decided I'd just have to go for it. I ran past the guard on to the platform, ignored him shouting at me and jumped on the train. I thought 'In for a penny...' and went and sat in first class to have breakfast. When the ticket inspector came round and asked for my ticket, I said I was terribly sorry, but I didn't have any money. He said: 'What do you mean you haven't got any money - you're having breakfast!' Fortunately, I did have a phone, so I got my branch of Lloyds Bank on the phone and, much to the amazement of everybody else sitting there eating breakfast, got them to give the ticket collector all my credit card details. Then I called someone at Capel Cure Myers, and asked him to wait downstairs with a £20 note to pay for the taxi from Euston. So I managed to get all the way there without any cash. We had our three meetings, each of them with about 20 institutions.

About three weeks later, I was buying lunch for a journalist from the *Birmingham Post* at the Savoy in London. As I was telling him how clever I was, I tapped my back pocket to illustrate the point - and I nearly died, because I'd done it again. I wasn't going to tell the journalist that, because it would have been too embarrassing. He'd have thought I went through life either being terribly inefficient or never paying for anything. So I said I had to go to the loo, and went up to the public telephones. I called the bank and they said: 'How do we know it's you?' I said I'd called them from the train about three weeks ago, and they said: 'It's definitely you'. I got them to call the manager of the restaurant and give him my credit card details, so he could make out the slip for me to sign. All credit to Lloyds Bank, they managed to do just that. Back in the office, I'm sure they were

wondering whether this idiot should really be running a public company. I've had a very bad back lately, and one of the things they tell you is not to carry a big wallet full of credit cards in your back pocket, because it makes you sit unevenly, which is bad for your spine. So now I can't put my wallet in my back pocket, and I don't know where to put it. I generally put it on the floor of the restaurant, then there's hell to pay when I get back to the office without it. It's pathetic, really. I'm worse than a four-year-old. Every time I leave the building they all ask: 'Have you got your hat on, have you got your scarf, have you got your wallet?' So I haven't got any better."

Howard Hodgson made £7m when he sold his funeral directors business in 1990, and went on to buy Ronson in 1994. He was talking to Paul Slade.

A refund in five years. What's the snag?

You'll probably forget to claim it, says Nic Cicutti

Amid the seemingly identical sales promotions plastered over the shop fronts in our high streets, one offer is becoming increasingly common: "Buy now and get all your money back in five years." Does this sound interesting?

It does to growing numbers of people. After all, who could turn down the offer of a total cash refund, where you also get to keep the item you bought only a few years earlier? Deals such as this one are now being snapped up by many thousands of new customers each year.

Despite their success, the Office of Fair Trading, a competition watchdog, this week warned customers to think carefully before entering into such an agreement.

A spokesman said: "If these schemes catch on, in five years' time there will be either a lot of happy or disappointed customers. Unfortunately, until the time is up we will not know which one."

The offer is beguilingly simple. You buy an item from a shop and some time later you receive a "cheque" - an IOU in reality - through the post for the same amount from the store. The cheque has a tear-off slip, which you complete and send to a finance company, registering for your money-back deal.

In theory, in five years' time you cash your IOU by sending it to the finance house, which will repay your original money after checking that you are on the register.

The deals are most often arranged through Intervest Capital, a US firm with offices in Grays, Essex.

Peter Kirwan is managing director of the Sofa Company, a firm with about 50



outlets around the country. He says: "We have been offering cashbacks for about 18 months to two years and arrange about 60 deals a week."

"We tended to offer interest-free credit. That costs us to arrange but the problem was that not everyone wants it, especially someone who prefers to pay in cash. Then cashbacks became available."

Sofa Company sends a voucher to customers shortly after a sale takes place. They then have 14 days to send on the completed form to Intervest. After the five years are

up, there is a 30-day time limit on claims.

Mr Kirwan admits the system is based on the likelihood that few people will take all the right steps needed to claim successfully.

"There may only be about 60 per cent of people who get their money back in five years," he says. "We believe that Intervest are large enough to meet any liabilities in a few years time. If it does go wrong, that does not mean people can come back to us. We did not plan it that way. We have paid someone to take care of it."

Intervest operates from

offices formerly used by another firm, Warranty Management, which once acted as its marketing agent.

Warranty Management, whose staff also now work for Intervest, once acted on behalf of a Belgian company, Homefield Insurance, which is no longer believed to be operating in the UK.

Intervest claims to have assets of more than \$500m and enough additional insurance to pick up the slack in the event of a rash of claims.

Adrian Roman, practice manager for Caplans, a firm of solicitors based in Harrow which has acted for Intervest since September, says: "The system is based on the fact that there will be a certain slippage between people eligible for the refund and those that apply for it. In effect, this is a financial memory test. If you remember to claim, you will have passed the test."

The OFT accepts that it is not possible to determine either way whether customers will get their money back in five years' time. It warns prospective buyers to:

- Ask to see a sample cheque, with all the terms on the back. Don't buy unless you read all the terms.

- Think of a way to remind yourself to claim in five years' time, within all the specified limits.

- Send all your correspondence by recorded delivery.

- Ask yourself: is the firm based in this country? Will you be able to claim if it is no longer based here? If your money is not refunded, would you still feel you had value from the product?

If you are not sure of the answers, it may be sensible to play safe and ignore the promotional blandishments.

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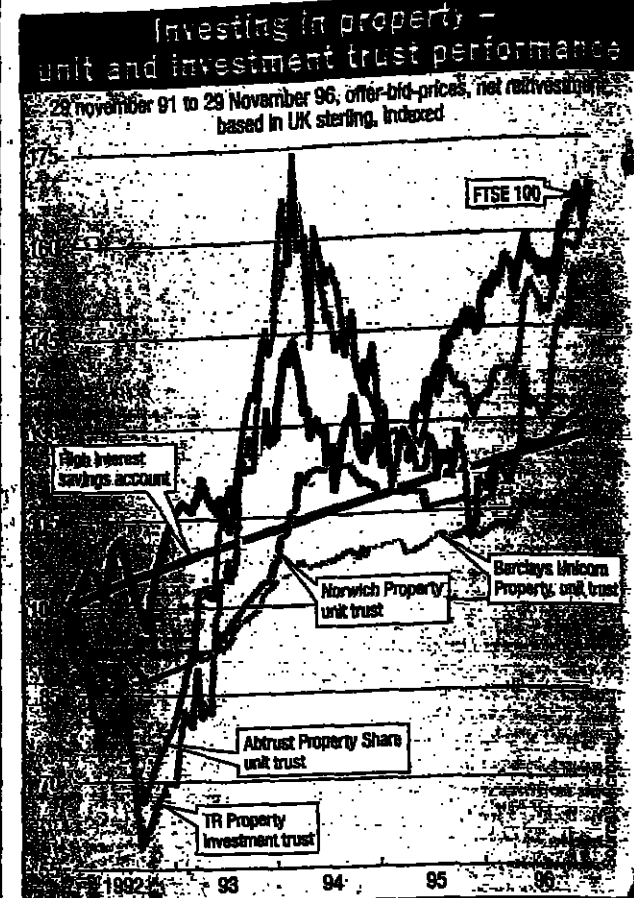
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Take shelter in property

Alison Eadie on specialist funds

Millions of home-owners invest in property every month - when they hand over a slice of their earnings to mortgage lenders to help pay off the loans they have taken out. For a much smaller minority, however, property investment is something they do without having to buy a roof over their heads. Instead, it involves placing their money in a range of unit and investment trusts that have benefited from the recent recovery in the property market.

The returns, after a decade in the doldrums, are encouraging. The FT property shares index is up 22 per cent on a year ago, against an 11 per cent rise for the stock market as a whole. Recovery is not exclusive to the residential sector. Commercial property, after suffering its worst recession with both rents and capital values falling in the early 1990s, is now enjoying rental growth again, particularly in the retail sector. A rise in capital values should, so the theory goes, follow not far behind.

Institutional interest in property has revived. British institutions, casting a nervous eye on the giddy heights to which UK and US stock markets have risen, are looking at property as a solid alternative investment. Overseas institutions, most notably the Germans, have been piling in, attracted by high yields.

Returns are mixed and reveal the ravages of recession. TR Property, an investment trust with 27 per cent of assets in direct property and the balance in property shares, shows total returns of 35 per cent in the year to the end of October, but over five years total returns are just 32 per cent.

Barclays Unicorn and Norwich Union property unit trusts, both with around 75 per cent of assets in direct commercial property and the balance in cash and property shares, are up 9 per cent and 14 per cent respectively in the year to the beginning of December, according to Micropal.

Over five years they are up 33 per cent and 41 per cent. Abtrust Property Share unit trust, which holds no direct property, is up 22 per cent over one year and 73 per cent over five years, Micropal shows.

Chris Turner, manager of TR Property, says: "Direct assets are holding the trust back at the moment as shares are racing ahead of property values. Shares normally predict the property market by six to 15 months, so values should be rising next year."

Andrew Thomson, who manages Barclays Unicorn Property Trust, points out property is less volatile in the short term than equities: "It took two to three years to knock capital values in the recession, because the valuation process takes time." By the same token a sustained rise in capital values will not

happen overnight. There is always the fear the stock market could be wrong. In 1993-1994, the FT property share index, buoyed by falling gilt yields, spurred ahead to reach peaks it has yet to regain. Property values, despite a flurry of activity, did not follow suit. The dawn proved to be false.

However, with capital values still some 30 per cent below their 1989 peak and yields averaging 8 per cent, Mr Thomson considers now a good time to be getting into property: "Property yields are at or above those on medium-dated gilts, meaning property is priced as a no-growth asset, which it is not." With a little more growth in rental values, yields should reduce and property enter a phase of rising value, he believes.

Over the next two to three years property is looking a pretty safe bet, according to Vince O'Brien, who runs Norwich Property Trust: "For the cautious investor who wants good income with some capital uplift, property is a good low-to-medium-risk investment," he says.

He is particularly keen on out-of-town retail developments, where the trust has been strongly positioned for some time.

Planning restrictions limit supply, but retailers are still desperate for space so rents will rise for the foreseeable future, he predicts. The trust is also increasing its exposure to high street retail property in the expectation it will benefit from rising consumer spending.

Mr Turner points out that the glut of excess capacity seems to be ebbing, although vacancy rates are still patchy. This is not a raging bull market yet, but there are now taken for good quality space.

The improvement in sentiment in the housing market is a good sign, Mr Turner reckons, although the commercial property market may be a year behind. West End offices and out-of-town shopping are the two areas the trust has picked to out-perform.

As well as owning shares in companies heavily exposed to these areas, the trust uses direct investment to go overweight. It has two out-of-town retail warehouses in its portfolio.

Abtrust Property Share favours office property in South-east England. Manager William Hemmings says: "They suffered the hardest in recession and because development has been low for a few years there is a lack of supply."

Yields on property trusts vary according to underlying assets. Abtrust at 2.3 per cent points out it is not a yield fund. Norwich and Barclays, because of high direct holdings, yield more than equity funds at 5.75 per cent and 5.1 per cent respectively after annual charges.

Mr Thomson says Barclays' yield should be about 6 per cent, when the trust is fully income-producing.

Unit Trust	Offer Price	Bid Price	Net Asset Value	Yield (%)	1 Year Return (%)	3 Year Return (%)	5 Year Return (%)
UK GROWTH & INCOME							
Barclays Growth & Income	1.00	0.99	1.00	5.75	12.5	35.0	45.0
Norwich Union Growth & Income	1.00	0.99	1.00	5.75	12.5	35.0	45.0
Abtrust Growth & Income	1.00	0.99	1.00	5.75	12.5	35.0	45.0
TR Growth & Income	1.00	0.99	1.00	5.75	12.5	35.0	45.0
UK EQUITY & BOND							
Barclays Equity & Bond	1.00	0.99	1.00	5.75	12.5	35.0	45.0
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TR Growth & Income	1.00	0.99	1.00	5.75	12.5	35.0	45.0
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Barclays Equity & Bond	1.00	0.99	1.00	5.75	12.5	35.0	45.0
Norwich Union Equity & Bond	1.00	0.99	1.00	5.75	12.5	35.0	45.0
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12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15/94	12/15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No surrender: try a sale instead

You can sell your endowment policy second-hand. But there are complications, says Neil Baker

Savers who no longer need their with-profits endowments or cannot afford the payments are often disappointed when they discover that the cash-in value of the policy is much less than they expected. It is sometimes possible to get more from the policy by selling it in a growing second-hand market instead of surrendering it to the company it was bought from. But after a court ruling last week, anyone considering such a move needs to shop around much more carefully. The ruling, pushed through by the Office of Fair Trading, removes the 3 per cent ceiling on commissions currently paid to advisers who sell the policies on their clients' behalf. The OFT argues that such a maximum commission restricts competition and works against a client's best interests. However, advisers argue that the effect of the OFT's move will be to force prices up, not down.

David Beale, a partner in Beale Dobie, a leading firm of second-hand endowment buyers and sellers, says: "Free competition among intermediaries usually leads to increased rather than reduced commission levels, so customers will ultimately lose out."

With-profits endowment policies are usually used to help pay off a mortgage. But only a third of policies taken out actually reach maturity. Some 30 per cent are cancelled in the first three years and 40 per cent are surrendered or sold.

If a policy is surrendered, the amount the holder gets back from the life company varies. But endowment policies are structured so that much of the value of the policy does not come until the last few years before it matures. This is partly because such policies attract heavy initial charges. Also a large part of a policy's final value is made up of a terminal bonus, paid only at the end of its life.

According to the Association of British Insurers, endowments worth £5.5bn are surrendered each year. Not all of these are with-profits policies – the sort that are traded second-hand – although an estimated £700m worth might be.

Peter Thorne, of financial advisers Parker Jerome, says the extra amount raised depends on the individual policy but it could be around 15 to 20 per cent above the surrender value. Because they already have a guaranteed minimum value and initial charges have been paid off, second-hand policies are seen as a good buy.

Companies such as Beale Dobie, SEC Group and Absolute Assigned Policies organise a market, matching people who want to sell policies with investors who want to buy.

In the past, these market-making companies have agreed among themselves that they would not pay more than 3 per cent to financial advisers

who bring in clients. But the OFT believes that a maximum commission would actually operate as a fixed standard. Its court action has led to market-makers giving an undertaking not to set commission levels in future.

David Beale says: "Our view is that 3 per cent is very reasonable but anything above that level ought to be questioned by the policyholder."

Policyholders aiming to sell their endowments must now ask their adviser what commission they are getting and shop around for advice if it seems too high.

Max Rosen, managing director of SEC, another endowment buyer and seller, says a further option is to bypass financial advisers and go to market-makers directly. About 50 per cent of policyholders do this at present. Those tempted to follow this route should remember that market-makers are not able to give advice.

Selling a policy in the traded

endowments market might not always be the best option. If you need money quickly or if you cannot afford to keep up payments, there are other alternatives:

- Take out a loan against the policy. Even if you do not pay the loan off, the policy's final value, after all charges have been paid off, might be more than the current surrender value.

- Make the policy "paid up". This means you stop paying premiums. The date of the payout stays the same and you will receive less.

- If you still need a cash lump sum, surrender or sale are not the only options. Companies such as Foster & Cranfield regularly auction policies.

Association of Policy Market Makers: 0171 729 8854
Foster & Cranfield: 0171 608 1941
For an independent financial adviser near you, call IFA Promotions: 0177 971 1177.



No need to hand over your valuable endowment policy to the insurance company Photograph: Ronald Grant



loose change

Allenbridge, the independent financial advice firm, is offering free copies of its new Peptalk guide, with details of best-performing Peps and how to choose between them. Call 0500-551000.

Midland Bank is offering new fixed-rate mortgages, including a two-year offer of 5.99 per cent, with booking fees and completion refunded on completion. Details from all branches.

Scottish Provident is launching two investment funds, Secure 100 and Secure 100 Maximiser, offering capital growth linked either to the FTSE-100 stock market index or actively managed by its fund manager, Profitic. Minimum investment is £10,000. Details from inde-

pendent financial advisers. Call 0117 971 1177.

Leeds & Holbeck is offering a 7.5 per cent gross top rate on deposits over £50,000 in its Albion Bonus postal account, including a guaranteed bonus of 1.5 per cent if no withdrawals are made before 30 April 1998. Call 0113 225 7777.

Canada Life is adding free accidental HIV cover to its critical illness and private health insurance products sold to members of the emergency services dentists, doctors, prison officers, and medical consultants. Details from 01701 651122.

Royal Bank of Scotland is offering a new fixed-rate Tessa, paying 6.5 per cent in year one and rising to 10.75 per cent in year five.

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Nat West First Reserve	2.63	2.63	2.63	2.63
Abbey National Instant Saver	2.25	2.45	3.1	3.5
Nationwide Cash Builder	2.8	2.8	3.5	4.2
Hellifield Liquid Gold	2.25	2.45	3.1	3.4

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Best borrowing rates

Telephone	% Rate and period	Max adv %	Fee	Incentive	Redemption penalty
MORTGAGES					
Fixed rates					
Scarborough BS	0800 590547	0.95 for 1 year	85	0.75%	1st 5 yrs: 6.83% of sum repaid
Northern Rock	0800 591500	4.89 to 1/1/99	95	£295	1st 5 yrs: 5% of sum repaid
Lambeth BS	0800 225221	7.45 to 1/1/02	70	£295	1st 5 yrs: 6mths interest
Variable rates					
Scarborough BS	0800 590547	0.75% for 1 year	90	—	1st 5 yrs: 6.23% of sum repaid
Principality BS	01222 344188	3.50% to 1/2/99	75	—	1st 5 yrs: 5% of sum repaid
Northern Rock BS	0800 591500	4.24% to 1/1/00	95	£295	1st 5 yrs: 5% of sum repaid
First time buyers fixed rates					
Bristol & West	0800 608088	1.95 to 1/10/97	90	275	To 30/9/01: 6-8 mths interest
Universal BS	0191 232 0973	6.45 to 1/2/00	90	£295	1st 6 yrs: 5% of advance
Northern Rock BS	0800 591500	7.48 to 1/1/02	95	£295	1st 6 yrs: 5% of sum repaid
First time buyers variable rates					
Staffordshire BS	01902 317317	1.96 to 1/12/97	90	—	1st 5 yrs: 5% of sum repaid
Greenwich BS	0181 8588212	3.49% for 2 years	95	£250	1st 5 yrs: discount reclaimed
Northern Rock BS	0800 591500	5.24% to 1/1/02	95	—	1st 5 yrs: 5% of sum repaid

Telephone	APR %	Max LTV	Fixed monthly payments (£3,000 over 3 years)
Unsecured			
Northern Rock BS	0345 421421	12.9H	With insurance £12.66
Royal B of Scotland	0800 121125	14.0	Without insurance £101.45
Northern Rock BS	0800 591500	14.9	£113.15
Secured (second charge)			
Clydesdale Bank	0800 240024	7.5	£3N - £15N
Royal B of Scotland	0131 523 7023	8.7	£2.5N-£100K
Barclays Bank	0800 00929	9.3/9.6	£10K-£75K

Telephone	Account	Authorized % pm	Unauthorized % pm	APR
OVERDRAFTS				
Woolwich BS	0800 400900	Current	0.76	9.5
Alliance & Leicester	0500 959595	Alliance	0.76	9.5
Bank of Scotland	0800 805805	Direct Cheque	11.0	—

Telephone	Card Type	Min income	Rate % pm	APR %	Annual Fee	Int. free period
CREDIT CARDS						
Standard						
Co-operative Bank	0800 109000	Advantage Visa	—	0.64N	7.90N	nil
Capital One Bank	0800 669000	Visa	—	0.797N	9.90N	nil
Robert Fleming/S&P	0800 829024	Mastercard/Visa	—	0.9167	11.50	nil
Gold cards						
Co-operative Bank	0345 212212	Visa	£20,000	0.50	10.50	£120
RBS Advanta	0800 077770	Visa	£20,000	0.94N	11.90N	nil
Royal B of Scotland	01702 362890	Visa	£20,000	1.05N	14.50N	£35

APR Annualised percentage rate. B-C Buildings and Contents insurance LTV Loan to value. NSU Accident, sickness and unemployment. E Available to comprehensive motor insurance policyholders aged over 21 years. H - Higher rate applies if insurance not arranged. N Introductory rate for a limited period.

All rates subject to change without notice.

Source: MONEYFACTS 01692 500677

12 December 1996

Best savings rates

Telephone number	Account	Notice or term	Deposit	Rate %	Interest interval
Portman BS					
Co-operative Bank	01202 292444	Instant Access	Instant	£100	4.50
Direct Line	0345 252000	Pathfinder	Instant	£5,000	4.75
Direct Line	0181 667 1121	Instant Savings	Instant	£10,000	5.50
Direct Line	0181 667 1121	Instant Savings	Instant	£50,000	5.75
Teachers' BS					
Scarborough BS	01202 887171	Bullion	Postal	£500	4.80
Scarborough BS	0800 590578	Instant by Post	Postal	£5,000	5.70
Bristol & West BS	0800 901109	Instant Access Postal	Postal	£10,000	6.00
Bristol & West BS	0800 901109	Instant Access Postal	Postal	£25,000	6.05
Cheltenham & Gloucester					
First National BS	0800 717505	Direct 30	30 day P	£100	5.50
Lloyds Joseph & Sons	01232 314050	High Yield	30 day	£25,000	6.45
Leeds & Holbeck BS	0171 288 2323	40 Day Notice	40 day	£10,000	6.22
Leeds & Holbeck BS	0113 223 7777	Postal Bonus	30/4/98P	£10,000	7.00
Kleinwort Benson					
Halifax BS	01202 502404	HICA	Instant	£2,500	5.20
Cheltenham & Gloucester	01422 335333	Asset Reserve	Instant	£10,000	4.00
Cheltenham & Gloucester	0800 717515	Classic Postal	Instant	£10,000	4.35
Schroders	0871 382 3301	Special	Instant	£10,000	5.15
Yorkshire					
Woolwich BS	0800 378836	Fixed Rate Bond	31/3/98	£5,000	6.50P
Coventry BS	0800 222200	Fixed Rate Bond	2 Year	£1,000	6.75P
Coventry BS	0345 665522	Fixed Rate Bond	30/11/99	£1,000	7.30P
Sun Banking Corp	01438 744505	Guaranteed Investment	5 Year	£1,000	7.50P
Sun Banking Corp					
Malwest Bank	01438 744505	Fixed Rate TESSA	5 years	£8,575	7.50P
Birmingham Midshires	0800 200400	Fixed Rate TESSA	5 years	£5,000	7.45P
West Bromwich BS	0645 720721	Inflation Beater	5 years	£1,000	7.00
West Bromwich BS	0990 143668	Inflation Beater	5 years	£250	7.00
Sun Banking Corporation					
Malwest Bank	01438 744505	Fixed Rate TESSA	5 years	£9,000	7.50P
National Counties BS	0800 200400	Fixed Rate TESSA	5 years	£5,000	7.45P
West Bromwich BS	01372 747771	Fixed Rate TESSA	5 years	£9,000	7.20
West Bromwich BS	0990 143668	Fixed Rate TESSA	5 years	£250	7.00
Investment Accounts					
			1 month	£20	4.75
			3 months	£200	5.25
			6 months	£25,000	5.50
			12 months	£2,000	6.00
			Series J	£25,000	6.25
			5 years	£100	6.50P
			12 months	£1,000	6.00P
			Series 3	£20,000	6.25P
			5 years	£500	7.00P
			43rd issue	£100	5.35P
			9th Index Linked	£100	2.50-3pi
			Issue H	£25	6.75P

P post only F fixed rate A All withdrawals subject to 30 day loss of interest. All rates are shown gross and are subject to change without notice.

Source: MONEYFACTS 01692 500677

12 December 1996

fear of finance



The Office of Fair Trading is generally reckoned to be a staunch defender of consumers' interests. It has been responsible for far-reaching reforms of how financial products are sold, including a requirement for companies to disclose the charges they impose on their policies.

Such reforms, plus the hard-hitting reports produced on a range of issues, from warranties on electrical goods to with-profit endowments, help keep companies on their toes.

At the same time, some of its officials are capable of the most crass errors of judgement. Elsewhere in this section, Neil Baker describes how the OFT has acted to scrap a maximum commission agreement on the sale of second-hand endowment policies.

Until now, any adviser acting on behalf of a client wanting to buy or sell such a policy could not charge more than 3 per cent commission. The OFT has now stepped in, arguing that such a policy is uncompetitive. By banning the deal, it hopes advisers will be prepared to offer cheaper deals.

That is the theory. What is the practice? Well, in the early 1990s, the life and pensions industry operated a similar maximum commissions agreement. For all its imperfections, the system worked reasonably well - until it was scrapped on the grounds that it prevented people getting an even better deal.

So what has happened to commissions since then? The average rate paid to advisers has risen in the past five years by up to 50 per cent, well ahead of inflation.

Who was responsible for scrapping the old commissions agreement? The OFT. How do we know about what has happened to commissions? Because, by a supreme irony, the OFT's very success in forcing companies to disclose how much they pay their advisers also demonstrates the extent of its failure to control the amount.

Who was it that pointed out how history has a tendency to repeat itself, first as tragedy, then as farce?

Journalists are often seen as cynical creatures. I wonder why? This week I received a letter from Cigna, the insurance firm.

"Dear Nic," it intoned. "Christmas is a time of great enjoyment, with houses full of fun and laughter, especially if you have young children about. However, it is a sad but unavoidable fact that accidents still happen in the festive season..."

The letter goes on to tell me about Cigna's policies which, for £5 a month, will pay up to £50,000 for accidents, including the loss of a child's sight.

As an exercise in cynicism, nothing beats this little missive. To think that we chop down trees for this.

Nic Cicutti

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	% Gross	% Net	% Gross	% Net
£100,000+	7.00	5.60	6.75	5.40
£50,000+	6.75	5.40	6.50	5.20
£25,000+	6.50	5.20	6.25	5.00
£10,000+	6.25	5.00	6.00	4.75

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Wall Street's bubble could burst soon

Jonathan Davis



Jonathan Davis

Like a suspected villain, the company it keeps, then it is time to start getting very worried by what is happening on Wall Street.

As we approach the last gasp of the great bull market of the past two years (the Dow Jones index is up by two thirds in that time), you would have to be very foolish to ignore the voices that are warning investors to beware of the fallout from the inevitable puncturing of Wall Street's bubble when it comes.

The most important of these voices, of course, is that of Alan Greenspan, who as chairman of the Federal Reserve, the American central bank, has more power than anyone to change the directions of markets. Nine days ago, he sent markets the world over into a tizzy with some elliptical but carefully crafted warnings about the risks to economic welfare posed by "irrational exuberance" among investors.

Since then, those who are paid to watch the Fed have been busy attempting to read deeper meaning into the chairman's words. Everyone knows he has been keeping a close watch in recent months on Wall Street for signs of excess. The surge of public and speculative money that has poured into US shares in the last two years must at some point run the risk of creating a dangerously inflated asset "bubble".

The immediate question among analysts has been whether the Federal Reserve is preparing to try and puncture the boom with a pre-emptive interest rate rise. Despite the initial panicky response, the reassuring view on Wall Street earlier this week was that no rate rises are imminent and that the bull market case therefore remains just about intact.

But Mr Greenspan's intervention - whether it was a warning shot or a more serious threat to try and stop Wall Street in its tracks - has brought other concerns out into the open.

Whether it is seasoned investors such as Sir James Goldsmith, or respected market pundits such as Barton Biggs of Morgan Stanley and Henry Kaufman, late of Salomons, the heaviest hitters are nearly all on the side of those who are urging investors not to tempt fate by being sucked into Wall Street's all too "exuberant" rise.

In this column two weeks

ago, I quoted the view of Peter Bernstein, another respected investment adviser, that while Wall Street might not be overvalued on conventional criteria, the risks of investing had risen sharply.

And only this week, Lord Roper-Mogg, the former editor of the *Times*, who has excellent contacts in Washington and the financial world, repeated his warning that a Wall Street crash is inevitable.

He made the point that if the dividend yield on the US stock market (now at a record low of just over 2 per cent) merely reverted to its long-term average (around 4.5 per cent), it would imply a fall in the Dow Jones index of no less than 70 per cent. His calculations suggest Wall Street is already discounting seven more years of 10 per cent growth in company earnings - despite the fact that the rate of profit growth is already very high by historical standards.

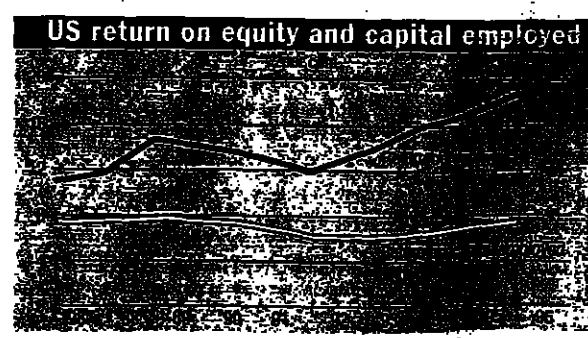
I have been impressed by the analysis done by Albert Edwards, market strategist at Kleinwort Benson, who has shown clearly (as my chart shows) that the improvement in companies' return on equity in the US is driven mainly by companies substituting debt for equity, not by any underlying improvement in the return on total capital employed.

This increase in gearing does raise return on equity - and therefore reported profits - but it also means (a) that investors are taking on greater risk than might at first appear, and (b) that in the same geared way, company earnings will fall much faster too when the next downturn comes.

The point is not that all these clever and experienced people might be wrong. Far from it, markets frequently make monkeys out of the most intelligent and well informed individuals. Nor is there any inconsistency in saying markets are basically overvalued but may still rise further. Markets always do things like excess, and timing the *top* is the hardest thing in the world.

In fact, it is perfectly possible to justify the current valuation on Wall Street. What matters to prudent investors is that they are aware of the risks they take on if they choose to ignore the warning voices.

When the chairman of the Fed starts making warning noises it pays to sit up and take notice. Not for nothing is the adage "Don't Fight the Fed" one of the oldest in Wall Street's lexicon.



WORLD COVER

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By Penny Jackson

Rosy and Patrick Brennan fell for this folly, as they call it, 11 years ago while looking for something smaller. Letting the house out as a film location seemed the obvious way of capitalising on its eccentric

That flume took only a day, but when it runs into weeks owners can find their houses getting a free make-over. Anna Sugden, who runs Strutt & Parker's film location agency, says that Lord Huntington was so taken with the way his house was redecorated for *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* that he opted to keep it. "Sometimes the owners can choose the wallpaper and curtains, but this is likely to be reflected in the facility fee."

Rosy Brennan's direct encounter with the Canadian crew left her in no doubt about the value of the location agent during the BBC's filming. But, with or without one, does it pay to spend a night up a ladder? "The money is good. But we see it as an occasional bonus, nothing you can rely on. It is certainly not worth it if you are excessively nervous about your house."



PHOTOGRAPH: ANDREW HASSON

Anna Sugden says that, as a general rule, commercials on a per-day basis pay the best rates, while feature film, television drama and documentaries pay least. "Fees

range from £500 to £3,500 a day. Our clients' average is £1,500 a day." Owners may not end up rich, but at least they can bask in the reflected fame of their houses.

Owners can contact their local UK Screen Commission to register a property. The British Film Commission in London has contact details :0171-224 5000.

Property prices in seaside towns south of London are enjoying a revival. Rosalind Russell reports

Peter and Cynthia Read have a home in London. But for

The Reads have bought their island home initially as a weekend retreat, but intend to retire

"We are rapidly moving towards a situation where the prices being asked are in line with those at the top of the market in 1989," he adds.

Brighton, once thought too far for a daily trip into the capital, is now home to so many daily commuters it is considered London by the sea. The journey time into Victoria by rail is 51 minutes, there are six trains an hour (serving Victoria and London Bridge) and the annual season ticket costs £2,460. All of which compares favourably with parts of Hertfordshire and Buckinghamshire, where property prices are much higher. A

The Thanet area in Kent is having money poured into it as a European Development Area, attempting to halt a decline which has seen some parts become quite seedy. Ramsgate, Broadstairs and Cliftonville, once popular seaside areas, are hoping for speedy restoration. In Cliftonville, near Margate, a four-bedroom thatched house

Sussex East and West, and Hampshire, are seeing the fastest price increases. "As houses come fresh to the market in the spring," says Stephen Montague-Jones, "owners will be looking for higher prices, which are likely to be achieved if the shortage of homes to buy continues."

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Keep the family in it

Roger Bell compares the Citroën Synergie with the Nissan Terrano

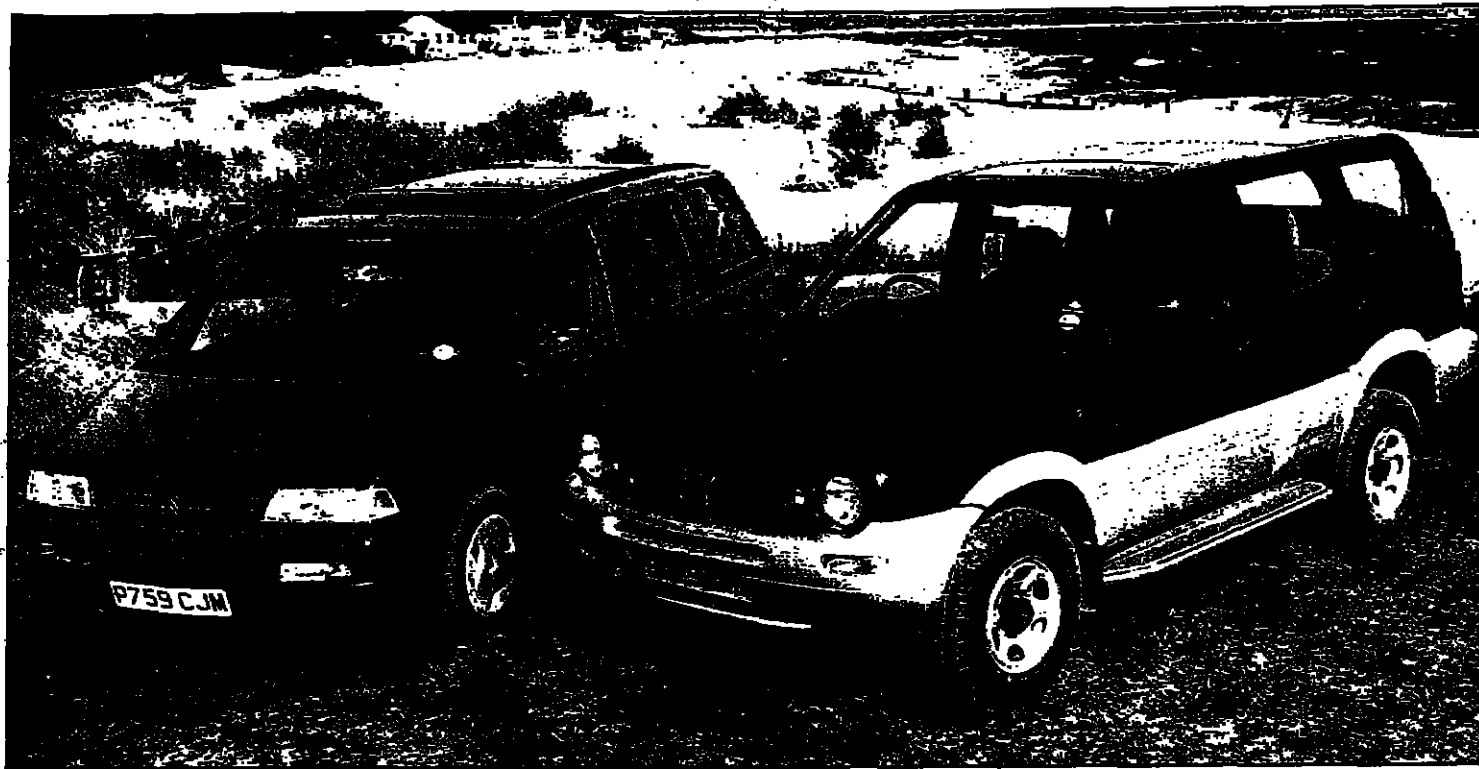
Britain's love affair with "lifestyle" off-roads, most of which crunch nothing more demanding than manured gravel, seems to have peaked. After a decade of dramatic boom (sales rose from under 13,000 in 1986 to over 80,000 last year) 4WD registrations have levelled off. By the end of the year, they may even be in decline.

Not so MPVS. Multi-purpose vehicles – boring vans with windows to cynics, revolutionary family holdalls to the converted – are gnawing into the market across a broad front. Just over 7,000 were registered in Britain five years ago when the pioneering Renault Espace led the field. The forecast this year is for nearer 30,000, with the lion's share going to the excellent Ford Galaxy and its VW Sharan and Seat Alhambra clones. By the turn of the century, it's estimated that 600,000 MPVs a year will have been sold in Europe.

Traditional estate cars have not been the invading MPVs' only victims. Off-roads – perhaps better described as all-purpose all-roads – are among their conquests, too. And why not? Size for size, these two specialised breeds have much in common.

The 4x4 Nissan Terrano (the Ford Maverik's twin) and the Citroën Synergie (made alongside the joint-venture Fiat Ulysse and Peugeot 806) may be from different market sectors but they're competitive on price, power and seven-seater accommodation. While the big, butch, all-drive Terrano can clearly out-scramble the front-drive Synergie, it is on suburban tarmac that the two usually compete.

Although similar in size, the Synergie, unencumbered by the weight of a 10-speed, 4x4 transmission system, is considerably lighter – and more significantly, economy. It's also easier to drive, not least because the gearlever, which protrudes from a classy dash, feels less agricultural than the Nissan's. Much as I like the effortless mid-range punch of the



MPVs and off-roads: size for size, these two specialised breeds have much in common

Photograph: Roger Bell

torquey Terrano's civilised 2.7 litre turbo-diesel, the 2.0-litre petrol engine of the test Citroën is smoother, quieter and niftier through the gears. Parity in performance (but not in economy) is achieved only when the Terrano's thirsty 2.4-litre petrol engine is pitched against the Citroën's frugal 1.9 turbo-diesel.

Driven with restraint, the Terrano behaves with reasonable decorum. Pushed beyond its natural ambling gait, though, it feels cumbersome. Steering is sluggish and vague, cornering grip modest. Like most off-roads, the Terrano lacks the stance, agility and tenacity of a low-slung saloon. It's the price you pay for massive boulder-straddling ground clearance and fairly crude suspension designed more for acute articulation than ride comfort. Even on decent roads, the Nissan bobs

and jerks harshly, albeit without kettledrum thumping from the big (and very expensive) tyres. The cabin is well isolated from road noise by a separate rugged chassis.

From the driver's seat, the Citroën Synergie looks, feels and behaves much more like a normal saloon. Although the roofline is high the centre of gravity is quite low. Whereas the Terrano perches on the road, as if on stilts, the Synergie, riding on smaller wheels and more sophisticated car-like suspension, squats on it. Handling and cornering benefit from this, though the ride is disappointingly agitated.

You sit a couple of inches taller in the Terrano, all the better for sight-seeing and hazard spotting. However, the versatile Synergie has the more imposing cabin and dash. Its individ-

ual seats – rows two and three served by easy-sliding doors – can be juggled around or discarded altogether. In the Terrano, only the uncomfortable rear bench can be removed. With all the seats in place, luggage space is pretty meagre in both cars.

If you really need mud-plugging, bank-climbing, stream-fording, precipice-defying transport, the Terrano's your car. Recent major improvements have elevated this rather gawky-looking vehicle from wimp to warrior, built like a tank and well endowed (the turbo-diesel is all muscle). As a road-going people carrier for the urban jungle, though, it is over-specified and under-achieving. The Synergie – a good MPV but not the best – makes a better job of transporting seven adults (if not their luggage) speedily, economically and comfortably.

Citroën Synergie: Price: £16,200 to £23,090 according to specification. Engine: 1.9-litre, 92bhp turbo-diesel or 2.0-litre 123bhp petrol. Transmission: five-speed manual gearbox, front-wheel drive. Performance: top speed 99mph; 0-60mph in 13.9 seconds, 31.7mpg urban cycle (diesel); 110mph, 0-60mph in 12.1 seconds, 23.9mpg urban cycle (petrol).

Nissan Terrano: Price: £16,600 to £23,100 according to specification. Engine: 2.7-litre, 125bhp turbo-diesel or 2.4-litre, 118bhp petrol. Transmission: five-speed manual gearbox, part-time four-wheel drive with selectable low-ratio, auto-locking front hubs. Performance: top speed 96mph, 0-60mph in 16.2 seconds, 22.6mpg urban cycle (diesel); 99mph, 0-60mph in 14.3 seconds, 17.9mpg urban cycle (petrol).



Gavin Green

Buttons on radios are invariably tiny, suitable only for people who have fingers shaped like ET

Of the innumerable design solecisms to be found on cars, none is more repulsive to the eye and more awkward to the hand than the typical radio. And that's before we talk about its sound quality. (In general, car radios – at least those fitted as standard by most manufacturers – sound appalling. This is no wonder. I have it on good authority that one major manufacturer buys its standard-specification radio/cassette players for only £20 – well under a tenth of what the same manufacturer charges for replacement units.)

Their poor sound quality is, arguably, excusable – after all, how many of us notice that they're so bad? But their shoddy appearance and usability are certainly not. In the main, they are just plastic-faced boxes fitted willy-nilly to some convenient (not for the user) position on the dash. Their buttons are invariably tiny, suitable only for people who have fingers shaped like ET. And what's more, the buttons have graphics which are incomprehensible to most punters. As an upshot, I'll wager that most buttons on car radios are never pushed, twirled or pulled.

In the old days, car radios tended to have two big round knobs – one for on/off and volume, the other for channel selection. Push buttons helped to locate your pre-programmed channels. This design worked well and looked good. It should never have changed. But it did. We have been confused ever since.

At long last there are signs of improvement. The new Ford Ka has a radio designed to integrate into the dash, rather than merely have a rectangular hole into which some radio manufacturer can insert its latest multi-channel, multi-watt eyecore. The Ka has big knobs and buttons, just like old-fashioned radios, designed to be pushed by fingers not pins. I mastered it in minutes, rather than remaining baffled by it for months.

Other manufacturers are now also making an effort. Most praiseworthy is the new Renault Espace, on sale in the UK next spring. It has a radio visible at all. This clearly deters the hooligan who, judging by the number of car radios stolen, seems to be the only person who understands modern car radios.

In the Espace, the radio's electronics are all hidden under the bonnet. Controls are mounted on satellites either side of the steering wheel. Renault pioneered satellite controls, a major and yet unused contribution to road safety, now copied by the likes of BMW and Jaguar (on its new XK8 sports car) among many other makers. They allow channels to be changed and the volume to be altered without taking your eye off the road and groping around at the bottom of the dash for those wretched little buttons. The Espace, though, now takes the concept a stage further.

By removing the radio head unit from the dash, Renault has also improved the cabin design. After all, what better way of tidying up the interior than by getting rid of its ugliest feature?

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